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CHRISTIAN COURIER

Picture-perfect

James Schaap

It was her idea from the get-go, but I was more than willing, it being Easter. Besides, lately it seems I haven't been getting enough sweet time with my granddaughter.

"You take my picture," she said, "and we'll put it on a card to send to Great-Grandma Schaap."

Sheesh – Easter brings out the best in us maybe. My granddaughter is coming to the age when Grandpa may well soon become little more than an old pair of argyle socks, so I'm at her beck and call. When she says she wants a picture for my mother, her great-grandma, I'm reaching for the Canon.

Outside we go. I take a few shots, show them to her, but she doesn't like 'em. Too much wind, she says. Her hair is messy. Cute as a bug's ear, my father would say, had he been around to see this. To her grandpa, to me, every last one of those shots is adorable. That child knows how to pose, believe me. But that's my fault, taking pictures of her constantly. I swear even the camera likes her.

Downstairs we go, out of the wind.

These days, we bring our children up on the computer. I put in the card and in an instant the proofs appear, the whole gallery. To her, not one of them is perfect, but I can excuse that; after all, no picture is, if you're the one in it.

Anyway, it seems she's seen that Microsoft commercial in which some three-year-old slaps together a panorama of her whole bedroom. She takes the shots, processes them and prints the whole long thing seamlessly. Three years old. It bugs my granddaughter that she's twice the kid's age and nowhere near as savvy. So maybe part of what happens next is sheer grudge. But down here in the basement in front of the computer, do I care? – the sweetheart is sitting on my lap.

She likes the same shot I do, so we don't argue. I get that picture alone up on the screen, Photoshop it a bit to give her a bit of tan – which she likes, and then she scowls at me and says, "Can you take this thing off?" There's a slight tan-ish mole on her cheek, barely visible, her grandpa thinks; but she's smart enough to know that with a keystroke or two Photoshop does skingrafts.

Done.

Her grandpa thinks this whole project is almost Easter-like in its selflessness. After all, she's the one who wanted to get a new picture for her Great-Grandma

See ***Picture-perfect*** *on page 2*

Tomb, thou shalt not hold Him longer;
Death is strong, but Life is stronger;
Stronger than the dark, the light;
Stronger than the wrong, the right;
Faith and Hope triumphant say
Christ will rise on Easter Day.

– Phillips Brooks, "An Easter Carol"

Easter Morning by He Qi

Dr. He Qi is a former professor at Nanjing Theological Seminary, and visiting professor at Nanjing University and Nanjing Art Institute. He is now a travelling artist and visiting scholar in the United States. His work has appeared in numerous galleries and publications.

News

Picture-perfect *continued*

Schaap, who otherwise, I'm thinking, hardly gets the time of day, way out east in Wisconsin. From the beginning, this idea was absolutely darling in its selflessness, right? Let me tell you what kind of granddaughter I've got.

So I'm getting the card stock out and outfitting the printer, when she says, "Papa, can you whiten my teeth?"

I'm not kidding. She's eight. Just. And she wants her teeth whitened? Just like that, those non-toiling lilies of the field, straight out of scripture, come into full bloom and they don't need Photoshop. For the first time, Grandpa is thinking there ought to be a moral lesson for his little girl, even a little sermon on toiling and spinning. WWJD?

But then, I tell myself – hey, it's Easter. Here I am, quality time, fiddling with her image, and the outcome is going to please my mother like no letter from her too-liberal son, the college professor, ever could. So what if that's an old "means-and-ends" argument? My granddaughter's vanity is just childishness, thus excusable; and besides, grandparents don't sin when it comes to our grandchildren. And did I say that there she sat on my lap? Forget the sermon, Jeremiah. There'll be time enough later, on down the road.

"Whitened teeth?" I say, "Let me give that a try."

Vanity, vanity – all is vanity.

Even for a Grandpa.

The story this Easter morning is all about perfect skin; it's all about "up from the grave he arose." Because he did, the world is forever changed. Nothing is the same as it was. He conquered death, rode our own sin right out of town forever and made a highway in our lives in nothing less than an eternal destiny of blessed timelessness. The gift of Easter is a forever morning, world without end in glorious color.

We will be with him – that's the story of Easter, every last one of His, even the ones the camera doesn't like, even those as gnarled by sin as the old scrub oaks on the windy side of a thousand prairie hills. Because of Easter, even grandpas and great-grandmas get themselves divinely Photoshopped, those pesky moles gone, those teeth bright and white as precious jewels.

Up from the grave he arose – and we with him. Imagine that. Put that shot in your scrapbook, and leave it there. Leave it there forever.

It's Easter. Praise the Lord for he has done marvelous things. Marvelous things. Just marvelous.

Praise his holy name. In his death and resurrection, hard as it is to believe, every last one of His is just plain picture-perfect.

At the end of this school year, Dr. James C. Schaap will finish 35 years of teaching at Dordt College, Sioux Center, Iowa, and enter retirement, a move he is joyfully anticipating. His various writings (stories, essays, and books) have been around just about as long as he has. He hopes that soon there will be more.

The congregation of Maranatha CRC worships in a newly-built facility in downtown Belleville, Ont.

Counselling ministry case to be decided by Judicial Code Committee

Ron Rupke

The fate of a senior CRC pastor and the counselling ministry he leads at the Maranatha Christian Reformed Church in Belleville, Ont. will be decided by the denomination's dispute-resolution of last resort. At a closed hearing held Feb. 22 and 23 in Burlington, the Judicial Code Committee of the Christian Reformed Church heard evidence and arguments in the case of Classis Quinte vs. Rev. John Visser and the council of Maranatha Christian Reformed Church.

The dispute between Maranatha and its classis revolves around the church's healing ministry. According to a paper entitled "Living in Community; the Ministry of Healing & Restoration at Maranatha" – which was released by the church council in October 2009 in response to questions and concerns about the ministry – Maranatha's healing ministry is based on a Christian life coaching approach to discipleship that seeks to establish therapeutic and healing relationships guided by the Holy Spirit. Those who lead the ministry are chosen for their life skills and relational ability to walk people through the experiential relearning process, rather than for their academic certification. A coach comes alongside an individual and offers his or her life experience, insights and godly wisdom to help the individual understand who they are, what God wants of them, and how to get there. The coach may identify obstacles and help the person being discipled to overcome them. Emphasis is placed on spiritual and emotional healing, and the church claims that life coaches have helped people work through dissociative and attachment disorders.

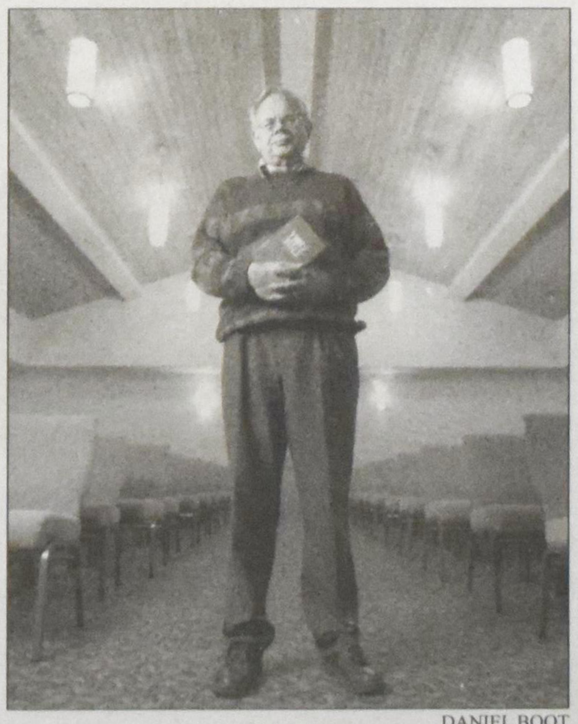
Several years ago Classis Quinte appointed a team of church visitors to meet with the Maranatha council to examine controversial aspects of the healing ministry, but the visitors reported back that the disputed matters were too complex and beyond their competence. In September 2010 Classis Quinte decided to appoint a five person independent team to re-assess the situation. The assessment team also received a mandate "to recommend to classis appropriate action to bring this matter to a just and God-glorifying resolution." Team members included two pastors from other Ontario classes, and several members with counselling credentials. The Maranatha church council also appointed one of the team members.

When the assessment team reported back to Classis Quinte on May 10, 2011, the team comprised just four members. Its written report explained that their initial attempts to bring the parties together using a restorative practices process called FaithCARE failed because the aggrieved members of the Maranatha church would not consent to the process. The assessment team decided at that point to continue its work by immersing itself into the details of the situation, and the Maranatha-appointed member of the assessment team resigned. The remaining team members continued their work.

Breach of confidentiality?

While reviewing the extensive written documents provided by the Maranatha council, the assessment team found a letter written to the team itself and shared with the assessment team on a confidential basis. This letter and related documents provided personal information revealed to the counselling staff of the church by one of the members who was now challenging the practices of Maranatha's healing ministry.

The assessment team considered this material to be "a shocking breach of confidentiality," and an example of what they decided to be legitimate complaint on the part of the aggrieved members. They went on to say that the Maranatha church policy of sharing confidential counselling information in certain situations put people in "a continued condition of serious risk." This led to their recommendation that classis should ask the council of Maranatha church to depose pastor John Visser from office, and provide honorary suspension from work for other Maranatha church staff members working in the healing ministry. Classis adopted the recommendations of its assessment team, and gave the Maranatha council two weeks to comply with its decision. It also stated its intent to suspend and replace council members who would not follow its directions.



DANIEL BOOT

Rev. John Visser has served the congregation of Maranatha CRC since 1985, and leads a ministry staff of seven.

The Maranatha council did not accede to the demands of classis; rather, it affirmed the integrity of Pastor Visser, the healing ministry and the church's staff. In order to force the classis to engage in further discussion, council also made a motion to disaffiliate with the Christian Reformed Church. This action resulted in a special meeting of Classis Quinte on June 2, 2011, where the Maranatha Church argued that the assessment team had exceeded its mandate to assess, and instead had chosen to investigate and adjudicate. After a nine hour session, which the classis clerk described as "very orderly" and "filled with prayer," the classis maintained its decisions.

The executive of Classis Quinte met with the Maranatha council to discuss the motion to disaffiliate. As a result of these conversations the council decided in July 2011 not to disaffiliate, but instead to appeal the Classis Quinte decisions to the 2012 Synod of the Christian Reformed Church. The classis executive agreed not to take any action against Maranatha Church while the appeal was underway. The assistant pastor of Maranatha church, Dave Botting, explained the church's decision in an interview published in the CRC's denominational magazine *The Banner* in August 2011: "Classis is asking council to do something that it can't do in good conscience before God.... Council does not believe that the assessment was fair, nor that the grounds of the motions have merit. This goes to the heart of the ministry of this church, and council stands behind the integrity of its senior pastor, its staff and our ministry. We do not believe we received a fair hearing or an opportunity to fully present our case. We are looking forward to a judicial code hearing."

Classis Quinte considered the Maranatha church situation once again at another special meeting on Sept. 13, 2011, called to consider whether to implement the decisions made on May 10. At this meeting the classis decided to suspend Rev. John Visser from the ministry while its original decisions were under appeal, and to commission an accredited independent assessment team to evaluate the policies and

See **Counselling case** *on page 2*

Column

From the Lab

Rudy Eikelboom

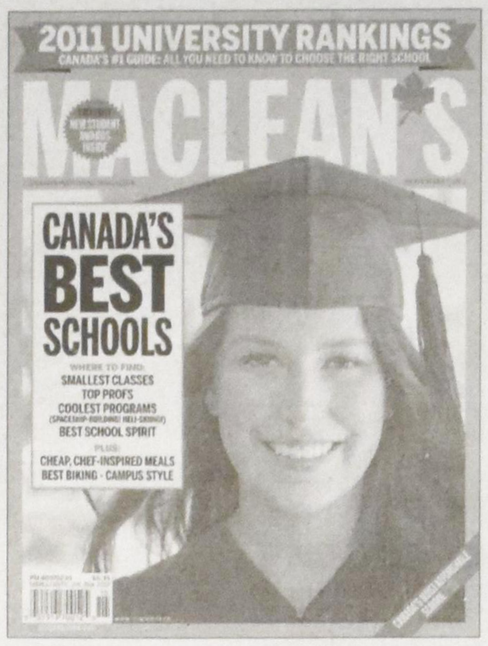
Evaluating university education

As a department chair I don't make it into the laboratory as much as I would like, and I have to pay more attention to the quality of our university education. Universities are expensive, and the public, parents, government and not the least our students have a right to expect a high-quality education. In our modern society, teaching and research are both carried out at universities, but I suspect that for most people it is the education that students receive that makes universities worthwhile. Thus it becomes important to determine if universities are doing a good job teaching their students.

Like many simple questions, evaluating a university education is not a simple task. Any university graduate will tell you that a lot of what he or she learned occurred outside the classroom walls. While students' performance in Developmental Psychology 201 can be measured by evaluating their assignments and test answers, these assessment tools measure only part of what I hope the benefit of this course – or any other – will be for the students. At the end of the day we would like our students to be intelligent citizens who can critically approach and solve the problems they face in work and all of life. We want them to be able to think critically, express themselves well, succeed in the challenges that they face in life, and enjoy the richness of God's creation.

Thus, universities evaluate their own performance in multiple ways that go far beyond the marks given in class and the degrees awarded at convocation. One measure that can be used is student career success: a few years out, how many graduates are employed and how good are their jobs? Herein lies the economic benefit of a university education: do students get a good return on their investment? While this is clearly an important aspect of education, most of us would agree that the value of a university education goes beyond career success. There is more to life than one's career, and universities would argue that an education improves the quality of life generally.

Since it is hard to get a single evaluation of these aspects of a university education, students are often surveyed about their impression of the value of their years at university. Many such surveys have become standardized and used across Canada. In particular, many of our universities work with the Canadian University Survey Consortium (CUSC), which surveys students on a three-year cycle: graduates, first-year students and all students, with slightly different questions for each group. Besides gaining demographic information about the student population at our universities (for example, aboriginal students are underrepresented), CUSC surveys ask questions about how satisfied students are with their education.



Christian universities consistently do well in student satisfaction surveys conducted by the Canadian University Survey Consortium and published in Maclean's *magazine.*

This past year the CUSC surveyed all students, who were asked how strongly they agreed with a number of statements such as:

- Most of my professors encourage students to participate in class discussions.
- At this university, professors treat students as individuals, not just numbers.
- My learning experiences at this university have been intellectually stimulating.

The survey results have just been released by CUSC, and select results were published by *Macleans*.

What is remarkable about these results is that for all questions published by *Macleans*, four institutions always appear in the top five (in alphabetic order): Concordia University College of Alberta, The King's University College (Edmonton), Redeemer University College and Trinity Western University. All four are Christian institutions. What a tribute to the faculty, staff and administration at our Christian post-secondary institutions! In our particular religious community, it should be a matter for thankfulness to our Lord that two of these institutions come from the Reformed tradition.

While there are many things that go into evaluating the quality of our universities, it should be clear to all that our Christian universities are doing a great job. I have commented previously on the high quality of the education I see at these schools in Psychology, the discipline I know best, but I would say that at an undergraduate level our Christian institutions have done a remarkable job at training and equipping our youth. It appears that our youth agree.

If you are (or know someone who is) looking to go to university, it would serve you well to seriously consider our Christian institutions. Learn more about these institutions by going to their websites and support them with your prayers and, if you are able, your financial resources.

Rudy Eikelboom (reikelboom@wlu.ca), whose wife, Janny, works at Redeemer, is a member of the Waterloo CRC and the Chair of the Psychology Department at Wilfrid Laurier University.

Counselling case *continued*

practices of Maranatha's healing ministry. The Maranatha Church council applied to the denomination's Board of Trustees for a "stay" of the classis decision suspending its pastor during the appeal period, and on Oct. 1, 2011 the trustees granted that request. The classis decision to commission an independent assessment team has been stalled because of a failure to find a team of candidates sufficiently independent to satisfy all the parties.

Worship and ministries continue

Articles in *The Banner* have suggested that the Belleville congregation is deeply divided, evidenced by the hundreds of comments posted on *The Banner* website in response to its coverage of this story. There is no doubt that the struggle within the congregation and the classis is deeply troubling to those called upon to resolve the controversy. Yet the Maranatha church, which is the largest congregation in Classis Quinte, continues its joyous worship services and a wide range of programs each week. Senior pastor John Visser has served the congregation since 1985, and leads a ministry staff of seven. Visser's counselling ministry and his vision of church as a healing community are outlined in his two books, *Blessings and Curses* and *Olive Shoots around Your Table*. Noteworthy in these books are the first person stories of parishioners whose lives have been transformed by the ministry at Maranatha and who gladly share their joy in Christ. The congregation worships in a newly-built facility located in the downtown area of their city, and as many as 850 worshipers gather on Sunday mornings in a theatre-style auditorium with seating for 1000. Another distinctive feature of the Maranatha Church is the relatively small council of six elders and three deacons, plus an *ex officio* clerk.

The Judicial Code Committee which heard the appeal in late February 2012 is expected to release its report sometime in May, prior to the CRC Synod meeting on the campus of Redeemer University College from June 8 to 14, 2012. However, immediately after hearing the evidence the JCC gave a preliminary recommendation to the CRC Board of Trustees, which subsequently chose to continue the "stay" on Classic Quinte's decision to suspend Rev. Visser from ministry.

CRC members within this central Ontario classis have wondered how to pray about such a significant struggle within our congregational neighbourhood. Personally, I'm asking God to allow the Maranatha congregation to find his wisdom in the judgment of the larger church community. But I'm also asking that the larger church may learn from Maranatha's powerful healing ministry.

Ron Rupke is a free-lance jornalist who farms in Northumberland County and prays at Grace CRC in Cobourg, Ont.

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Editorials

Christian schools, contracts and ethical practice

John Vriend

Let me add my voice to the recent comments in *CC* by John Joosse (Feb. 13; "Thoughts about excellence and authority in Christian schools") and John Tamming (Dec12; "Christian schools and teacher firing") about contracts, excellence and ethical practice in Ontario Alliance Christian schools (OACS). Until January 2011 I was directly involved in virtually every discussion and mediation on teacher dismissals because I served as the Employment Service Consultant for the Ontario Christian School Teachers Association (OCSTA) as part of my commitment to Christian education and teachers.

I know from direct experience that it is true, as John Joosse says, that there is "a legacy of at least 10 questionable terminations in our Christian schools." In my last report to OCSTA I summarized that in the last four or five years there have been a dozen cases in which school boards have dismissed teachers from regular continuing contracts in violation of promises made in those contracts. I reported last year to the OCSTA board and would like to say publicly that "It is my view that I have failed these 12 teachers and that OCSTA has failed them!" Certainty about the real reasons for breach-of-contract-dismissals is difficult to assess, but at least one board has admitted the purpose was to save money by asking (forcing) experienced teachers to leave.

Please do not misunderstand; most Christian school boards treat teachers well and honour contracts. However, it needs to be said that there is a growing problem in that a small minority of school boards – following legal advice like that suggested by Tamming – are deciding that it is easier and cheaper to dismiss, without cause, experienced teachers than to look at salaries and performance issues together as promised in the contracts.

A tragedy

One of the reasons that I feel compelled to speak out on this issue is the recent and very tragic case in which a very talented and dedicated teacher, who was dismissed in clear breach of contract provisions, tragically took her own life. No one could have anticipated this tragedy, but it should further motivate all Christian communities to rededicate themselves to dealing ethically with their teachers. Teachers need to know that their employers, in actual practice, share the ideals and commitments professed in support of Christian education. We all need to "walk the talk!"

For the last couple of years I have repeatedly noted that public attention to the problem is long overdue and that the OACS/OCSTA arbitration process needs to include reinstatement of teachers dismissed without cause. While this is theoretically possible today, no teacher has been reinstated via the OACS/OCSTA mediation process. Boards are well aware of this, so those few tempted to dismiss teachers without proper cause know they will get away with just a financial penalty that is easily recouped by replacing an experienced teacher with a new teacher without length-of-service increments. They, and their lawyers, know that OCSTA has a history of trusting in "dialogue" even in the face of deliberate and continued injustice and view this as acquiescence that allows them to set aside contract promises with just a limited financial penalty.

General agreements

All teachers really do need the protection of general agreements rather than the vulnerability of individual contracts. While most secondary teachers in OACS schools have the benefit of a general agreement, most elementary teachers do not. The teachers' organization, OCSTA (now taking the new name Edifide) and the OACS should be publicly recommending general agreements for all teachers. Not only would this provide teachers with better professional protection against injustice, it would also improve the general relationship and trust between boards and their teachers.

In conclusion let me add a couple thoughts on excellence, which is an important goal for Christian schools and is sometimes cited as justification for dismissal of teachers. The experience of 20 plus years as an education professor and Director of Teacher Education at Redeemer University College has allowed me to visit and observe more than 100 classrooms in public, Catholic and independent schools where our student teachers were placed, and I have seen the range of professional practice from outstanding to unsatisfactory. While most schools and school systems have strengths and weaknesses, it is my judgement that, on the whole, the education offered by the teachers in OACS schools is excellent and second to none. Also, the contract framework in OACS schools provides clear provision for mandatory improvement or dismissal of teachers in those few cases when professional practice falls below acceptable levels.

Breaking contract promises is never an acceptable or useful avenue to excellence and should have no place in Christian schools.

Over a 40 year career in Ontario Christian schools, Dr. John Vriend has served as a classroom teacher, principal and board member. For the past 20 plus years, until semi-retirement in 2006, he was Associate Professor and Director of Teacher Education at Redeemer University College in Ancaster, Ont.

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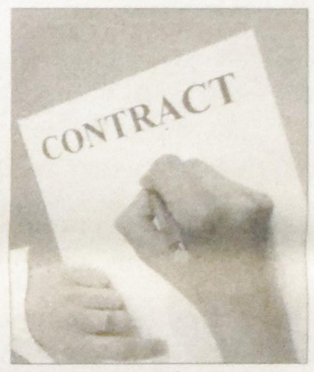
Good ethics means mutual faithfulness

Bert Witvoet

In the Feb. 13, 2012 issue of *CC*, John Joosse wrote an article about excellence and authority in Christian schools. In it he lamented the recent legacy of questionable terminations in our Ontario Christian schools. A dozen or so teachers have been dismissed with little or no due process. He also noted a greater concentration of power in the COO (Chief Operating Officer) who wields more power than is customarily given to a principal. Sometimes staff members do not have access to the board except through the COO, who can decide whether or not to pass on certain concerns and can fire staff without the board's approval. Is this a good development in our Christian schools? Do ordinary members of the school society still know what is happening in their schools?

Some school boards think it's perfectly justifiable to break an existing contractual obligation they have to a teacher as long as they pay a penalty for breach of contract. As if money solves the problem of loss of employment in a Christian community or the shock of being considered expendable when there is no just cause for termination. Is it right for a board to violate such contractual obligations as "just cause" and "a fair hearing"? Offering a financial settlement helps them escape legal ramification but doesn't make their action "legal" anymore than paying a traffic ticket makes speeding legal. And it certainly doesn't make it ethical.



A contractual agreement is like an oath that must be kept, even when it hurts. Without good ethics, the Christian school will crumble and lose its right to exist.

Good ethics are important to the survival of any human society and its associations, including the Christian school community. And good ethics means promises must be kept. Psalm 15 asks the question "Who may dwell in your sanctuary?" The answer: The person who, among other things, "keeps his oath even when it hurts." A contractual agreement is like an oath that must be kept, even when it hurts. Without good ethics, the Christian school will crumble and lose its right to exist.

The I-Thou relation

I am reminded of a 1964 Unionville lecture by F.H. Von Meyenfeldt entitled "The Meaning of Ethos." He said, "When we have to establish an association … we draw up a set of regulations in which we formulate stipulations for mutual faithfulness. Without that togetherness it would not be possible to join in concerted effort." He continues: "The typical nature of ethos is the I-Thou relation, provided that the "I" and the "Thou" can rely upon one another. That is the significance of a set of regulations: they draw up reliable rules for a lasting peaceful relation between people."

Notice the references to "mutual faithfulness," "togetherness," "the I-Thou relation," "Rely upon one another," "Reliable rules for a lasting peace between people." These statements are all expressions loaded with obligation. The "I-Thou" concept means that we treat each other with respect as fellow image bearers, not as objects to be discarded. If too much power resides in the COO, staff members become objects. There ceases to be an I-Thou relationship.

When someone promises something in a contract and decides not to honour the promise, that decision is unethical. But it's equally unethical to draw up new contracts that remove previous ethical standards. When new contracts remove necessary stipulations for mutual faithfulness in employer-employee relations, such as due process and just cause, this creates an ethical vacuum. It breaks the covenant relation between people. It makes them less trustworthy as co-workers in the Kingdom. Trust is an important part of human life and of human communities. When trust is broken, the community suffers as well as individuals within that community. No amount of settlement money rectifies that injustice.

Underlying good ethical practices is the respect we are commanded to have for each other. We destroy each other when we act unethically.

Letters

COMMENT

A challenging perspective on pacifism

Harry Kooy

I've been reading the recent *CC* articles about pacifism with great interest. I have also been reading the ideas of the French philosopher, Rene Girard. Girard provides an interesting perspective on pacifism that I find very challenging. If Girard is right, the whole point of the New Testament and the Bible itself is that a true radical pacifism modeled on Christ is the only hope for humanity and the choice to use violence is nothing less than a rejection of the Kingdom of God. Rene Girard's ideas grew out of 40 or more years of wide ranging research. He claims that his ideas are scientific in the sense that they offer the simplest explanation for the human condition. I'll try to summarize his conclusions but please read him for yourself before you dismiss or criticize him.

Rene Girard's conclusions grow out of his observation that humans show an almost unstoppable and at the same time unconscious tendency to imitate one another. Girard uses the term mimetic to describe this tendency and his work is all about the consequences of this mimetic impulse in every one of us. Mimetic desire is a destructive force in every society and leads to a crisis of escalating uncontrollable violence. According to Girard humans would never rise above this brute struggle of each against each if it wasn't for the relief from violence brought about by focusing the violence upon an arbitrary victim. Humans can get along if the whole group or mob can focus its aggression on one victim. This scapegoat mechanism serves as the hidden basis of every human society and is preserved in myth and religion. Girard devotes much of his writing effort to provide convincing examples and observations to support this idea.

During his study of the myths and religions from around the world Girard was struck by the power and uniqueness of the Bible. By constantly exposing the plight of the victim the Bible stands in radical contrast to the myths of any other culture. It is only the Bible that tunes our ear to the cry of Abel's spilt blood. According to Girard, we wouldn't even know about scapegoats and their crucial role in human history if it wasn't for the Biblical texts. The Bible reveals the ugliness of violence in a progressive way by showing that God is on the side of the victim. If we are disturbed by the violence in the Bible it is only because the Bible's message has forced us to be disturbed by violence. The death and resurrection of Jesus exposes the scapegoat mechanism so that it can no longer function. It is in this sense that Jesus brings a sword. A study of the last 2000 or more years shows humans lurching out of control claiming more and more victims with less and less of the stability provided by scapegoating.

I find Girard so challenging because, if he is right, the line between violence and nonviolence is the line between following Jesus or Satan. Surely we are to take up arms to defend the many helpless victims in the troubled places in this world! Girard's analysis stops us: not from engaging in issues of social justice but from using military force of any kind. He points out that any war progresses in an escalating cycle of violence because each side mimics the other's atrocities without realizing it (the longer the war the harder it is to tell the difference between each side). I challenge you to look at the history of every war with this in mind and see if it makes sense. You can't use whipped up fervour to defend victims as an excuse for war because that's what everyone does. The greater the number of victims, the greater the violence, the greater the number of victims and on and on it goes. It must be pointed out that soldiers are to be numbered with the victims. If our country chooses to go to war we are all responsible for the violence and can not smugly blame our soldiers.

Is there hope for us? Girard takes us back to where we began: imitation. If imitating each other got us into this mess perhaps we should instead imitate Christ. And who does Christ imitate? He not only imitates but actually is God. And what does God do? He dies as an innocent and unresisting victim of human violence. If Girard is right the Bible is the ultimate pacifist manifesto.

To read more about Rene Girard's ideas I highly recommend *Violence Unveiled* by Gil Bailie. A good introduction to Girard's writings can be found in *The Girard Reader*.

Harry Kooy graduated from Redeemer University College. He works in Kitchener as an auto mechanic and reads books during his lunch break. Most of Harry's books have grease smudges and folded over page corners.

Good ethics *continued*

Great psychological and spiritual harm can be done by unethical dismissals. We build each other up when we act ethically. Marriage, family, church, Christian school, friendship cannot flourish if we act unethically. God's blessing will not rest on unethical behaviour.

"Ethos has to do with our behaviour in the world, with our style of living on earth," said Von Meyenfeldt. He noted that in the 20th century we have seen a gradual depersonalization of human life, the predominance of material economic factors and the neglect of spiritual values. Isn't one of the main reasons for operating Christian schools that we try to counteract these disobedient responses to God's call for righteousness and justice?

What is our style of living in our Christian schools? The way we treat our teachers is a matter of witness to the world. They will know we are Christians by our ethos.

Bert Witvoet has been a teacher, a vice-principal and a principal in Christian schools in Ontario. He was editor of the Christian Educators Journal *for 10 years. He lives in St. Catharines, Ont.*

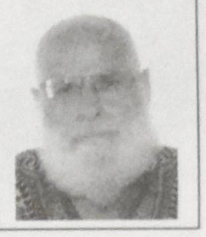
COMMENT

Easter dates

Bert den Boggende

Not many people can quickly calculate the dates for Easter. Usually they know it is the Sunday after Good Friday but that still does not help calculating the Easter date. Already the early church experienced difficulties. The church historian Eusebius (c.265-c.339) stated in his *Church History* (V.23-25) that "there was a considerable discussion," which at times was quite heated. Eastern churches, known by the fancy name Quartodemani, followed the Jewish calculation for Passover, insisting that Easter be celebrated on 14 Nissan, which could fall on any day of the week. Western churches, however, insisted that Easter should be celebrated on a Sunday. In 325, after about 150 years of quarrelling, the Council of Nicea attempted to settle the controversy, decreeing that Easter should be celebrated on the first Sunday after the vernal full moon and never on 14 Nissan. The controversy continued in Britain until the seventh century and Eastern Orthodox churches still celebrate on a different day than the Western churches due to different calculations.

Theologically the Passover is important for a proper understanding of Good Friday, but the actual date seems unimportant for nearly all Christians, except perhaps for some theologians. Having discarded 14 Nissan it is perhaps time to set a fixed Sunday between March 21 and April 21, perhaps the last Sunday in March or the first Sunday in April. What do you think?



Bert den Boggende has a PhD in British history and is a retired teacher. He lives in Brooks, Alta.

Napping on mountains

If I were one of the several senior citizens I met whilst skiing on Grouse Mountain yesterday, I would be offended by Lloyd Rang's stereotyping of those living in their golden years ("Pick-up sticks" *CC* Feb. 13). Sitting on the chairlift I had hoped to impress a man well into his 70s by boasting 19 ski days the previous year. He chuckled and bested me with his 53 ski days the year before. He philosophically concluded by extolling the advantages of retirement. Later, I noticed him on the peak of Grouse Mountain sitting in the sun eating his lunch, drinking coffee from a thermos and reflectively gazing down upon the city of Vancouver. He had taken his skis off and, by piling up some snow, had rigged a comfortable impromptu bench. I skied down the peak and on my return I noticed he had nodded off in the winter sun. How cool is that? Slow and cautious is not the way I would describe this man or any of the other senior citizens skiing Grouse Mountain yesterday. When I am 70 I plan to ski every day and nap on top of mountains. And if, after I awaken, the Lloyd Rangs of the world are cautiously picking their way down in front of me ... beware!

Ray Stellingwerff
Surrey, B.C.

Oil sands

While I can applaud those who work to more responsibly extract oil from the sands ("Christianity and the oil sands" Feb. 27), I can't help but wondering if the whole venture really is reflective of God's creative character as Phil Reinders suggests. We can call it part of our cultural mandate but in doing so are we not, to borrow Obama's line, attempting to put lipstick on a pig? With the large-scale detrimental effects to our health and to the environment we do well to remember that not all creativity is God glorifying. We humans have been known to create monsters. Perhaps there's a fine line in all of this, but what about the line in Revelation 11:18? "The time has come for judging the dead ... and for destroying those who destroy the earth."

Peter Stellingwerff
Salmon Arm, B.C.

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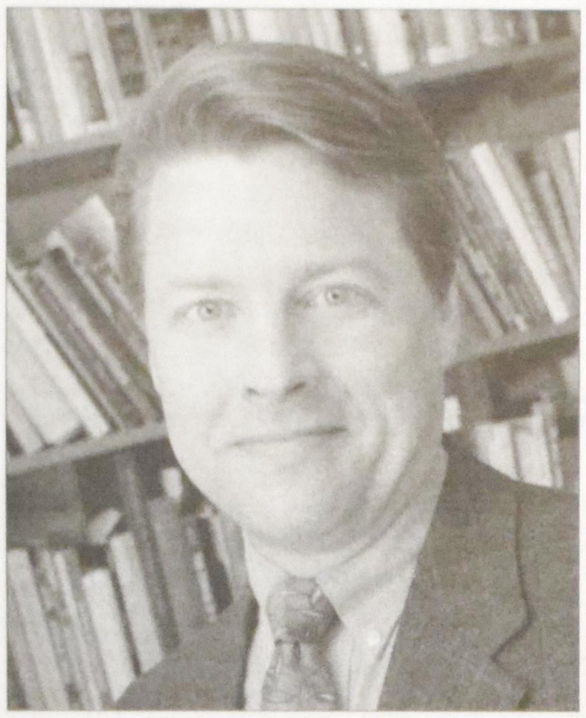
Reformed worship: a conversation with John Witvliet



John Witvliet is the Director of the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship. In the following interview he talks to CC interim editor Michael Buma about Reformed ideas of worship, the importance of the hymnal, and the use of other artistic mediums in worship.

The Calvin Institute of Christian Worship was founded fairly recently in 1997. Were there any particular events or developments that led to the creation of the Institute? How did we identify the need for the services you provide?

The Institute arose out of a confluence of several factors: the growth of the Calvin Symposium on worship (which had begun 10 years before the founding of CICW), a period of ferment in the churches, conversations among several CRC agency staff members about the need for collaborative work in this area and the desire of Calvin College to reach out to many constituencies through new programs, centers and institutes.

According to your website, the Institute is concerned with "the study and renewal of worship." The word "renewal" seems to imply that something is currently lacking in Christian worship. Is this the case?

We don't mean to imply that our age is any worse or any better than any other age. We use the term with the conviction that renewal is a perennial need and opportunity for Christians (Rom. 12:1). Just as the Holy Spirit renews the face of the earth (Ps. 104), so too the Holy Spirit renews and strengthens us. In this sense "renewal" is important for both new and established churches and believers.

What exactly is the Reformed idea of worship? Is there any fixed formula or necessary format? Or is it more a particular approach or attitude?

Reformed Christians join with nearly all orthodox Christians in believing that corporate worship is an opportunity to engage with the triune God – to listen to God and to speak to God, to commune with God and each other, in response to the Bible's commands about meeting together for prayer, the Lord's Supper and corporate song. In this context, Reformed Christians have typically emphasized that worship is a renewal of the covenant God makes with us through Christ and how worship announces and leans forward into the kingdom that Jesus announces.

The Bible does not prescribe an order of worship, but that does not entail that anything goes. Rather, we seek in all we do to embody biblical wisdom about worship – learning from both the forms of the Bible's own prayers and sermons and the attitudes the Bible insists on, such as humility, reverence, honesty and trust in God.

One of the big mistakes the church has repeatedly made is thinking that the form or pattern of worship doesn't matter. Every form emphasizes some things, and neglects others. A good form should allow us to both listen to God and to pray to God. It should be anchored in how God comes to us through Word and Sacrament, and then expanded to create space for us to offer our praise, prayer and offerings.

How have Christian Reformed beliefs about worship changed over the years?

Our worship practices have changed dramatically in most contexts. But so have our beliefs about worship. For the good, we have recently been rediscovering Calvin's insistence that worship is a time in which God acts to form us in and through our actions. On the not-so-good side, some practices we slip into can perpetuate, rather than critique moralism. If all we do is give people advice and admonition (even about good worship), we ultimately undermine the gospel.

It seems that for a long time many churches were having heated discussions over whether their worship music should be traditional or contemporary. Are these worship wars still going on within the CRC? If so, what advice do you have for congregations who are having this discussion?

In some churches, this feels like a good description of the 1990s. In others, it feels like a description of today. My main advice is to choose the very best songs in each genre to use. It's easy to critique weak songs in styles you don't like. One church made progress by inviting people in opposing groups to identify the very best songs in the style they didn't like. They then realized that they easily could find a balanced diet of 80 or so songs that pretty much everyone couldn't find much wrong with. That's enough songs, with a few repetitions here and there, to cover half a year or more of a "ceasefire."

Another debate that some churches seem to be having is whether music leadership should be open to all volunteers who want to participate or limited to the most proficient (sometimes professional) musicians. What advice would you offer here?

This is a tension in nearly every area of the church's life. Do we want gifted teachers to shape church school, or should everyone volunteer? Do we want gifted accountants to be on our finance committees, or is it valuable to give everyone a chance at serving here?

Churches err in two directions: 1) ignoring, dismissing, and failing to recognize the astonishing gifts God gives us through trained musicians, and 2) making music inaccessible to average congregation members.

The best professional church musicians I know are precisely those who help unmusical people love to sing together. And good volunteers often are very grateful to be able to lean on proficient musicians. As with so much else in church life, we need to embody hospitality in our dealings with each other.

As more and more churches move to projecting song lyrics onto screens at the front of the sanctuary, is the age of the hymnal over? If so, does this matter?

The CRC and RCA's new hymnal, Lift Up Your Hearts, *will be published in 2013.*

The age of the hymnal-*as-we-knew-it* may be over. However, it would be foolish and naïve to assume that the era of hymnals is over! Some recently released hymnals are, in fact, turning into best sellers. Why? First, hymnals are indispensable devotional guides for home use – at pianos, keyboards and for bedside reading and prayer (let's hope for more Kindle versions to help this, too!). Second, nearly every church could be blest by having 20+ hymnals on a cart for use in meetings. Singing a song prior to a council meeting or Bible study is terrific, and how tragic it would be if we didn't sing just because it was too much trouble to set up all the equipment to project a text. Third, a hymnal is a terrific, comprehensive teaching tool. There is no Bible class, no new believer's class, no seekers class, no Sunday school topic that can't be complemented by reviewing a good hymn or song text. Fourth, many churches who project lyrics are also discovering that some songs work better for projection (upbeat, unison) and others work much better with hymnals (more contemplative, with harmony). How simple-minded of us to think that we have to have everything either projected or everything sung out of a book! Fifth, many new hymnals are including a wide range of music – they are the best tool for helping musically homogenous churches (which include a lot of both traditional and contemporary ones) discover songs that can stretch them. So let's embrace new ways of using hymnals. All these reasons make me very excited about the potential for the new CRC-RCA hymnal, coming in 2013.

Not long ago I attended a CRC church plant in which the praise team played a U2 song as part of the worship service. What do you think about the use of spiritually-inflected secular music in Christian worship? Is it appropriate? Is it effective?

So much depends on how that music is "framed" – how it is introduced, and what we intend for people to be doing as they listen to that music. If the song is an illustration of a point in the sermon, that could be fine (though it may be harder to pull this off than we might first think). If the song is simply background music for the prelude, it is not formally different than an organist playing Handel's Water Music. But I'm not sure that either approach really helps most people engage in worship. In theory, using secular music may seem like a natural outworking of a theology of common grace. But I think that in most cases, without quite a bit of teaching or explanation, that this kind of thing ends up making worship less explicitly Trinitarian and Christocentric. This seems unwise in a world that needs more, not less awareness of the stunning beauty of explicit Trinitarian, Christocentric conviction.

I've been focusing mainly on music so far, but the Institute for Christian Worship offers resources and scholarship related to the use of many different artistic mediums. Why are art, dance, drama, and other mediums important in Christian worship? What advice would you give to churches who don't know where to start with all of this?

The arts have the capacity to contribute immensely to worship. But they do require time, resources and capacity. My main advice: start by identifying the gifts of people in or near your congregation. Do modest things well rather than overly-ambitious things badly, in ways that close off future possibilities.

Be sure, though, to make choices that strengthen the basic actions of worship (proclamation, praise, prayer, lament, confession etc.), rather than to distract from them. Having a drama team present scripture, having a dance team use gesture to embody a prayer, having a painter depict a lament can each be powerful. The key is to tie the art-form to a specific worship action. The test for this is what people say after church. Do they say "what impressive or interesting art" or do they say "that art really helped me to pray or helped to proclaim the message of the biblical text"? We never want art to be an end in itself, but rather a means to deeper engagement with God.

I don't know if this falls under the category of worship, *per se*, but has the Institute reflected at all on changing trends in church architecture?

We think about architecture a lot, and have enjoyed learning from several grant-funded

See **Reformed worship** *on page 6*

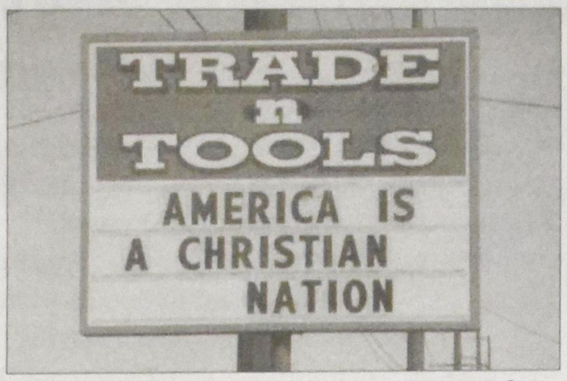
Columns

An entitlement identity

Brent van Staalduinen

My question is this: Why should an increasingly diverse and secular society be expected to preserve Judeo-Christian ideals and principles? My answer: It shouldn't. We shouldn't expect it to. And it shouldn't affect our mandate at all.

I've been noticing a disturbing trend in the public face of our church leaders, lobbyists and Christian politicians of late when it comes to the media's favourite "Christian" topics: same-sex marriage, abortion, prayer in schools, stem-cell research, evolution, euthanasia and so on. You know, the issues and the stories that habitually reappear as the ones we as Christians talk about the most and the ones that, predictably, the media enjoys polarizing into liberal-conservative brouhahas.



We Christians have grown so accustomed to being protected by this system of beliefs that we have forgotten how to respond when we are not.

But that doesn't disturb me – the media has always fed itself with controversy. What is troubling is the "Christian response" to those and myriad other issues which seem to be continually under attack. Christian lobbyists, church leaders and politicians have allowed a new tone to creep in, one that smacks of desperation and begging, featuring such chestnuts as *The tradition of Judeo-Christian ethics, Our most cherished and time-honoured beliefs*, *The preservation of all we hold dear*….

Again, though, we need to ask the question about preserving those things in the face of a rapidly transforming cultural and religious mosaic. Why should we expect others who don't share our ideals to embrace them, much less plead with governments to build public policy around them?

I'm not saying that we shouldn't fight for our beliefs. What I am saying is that when our leaders and public figures take to pleading on our behalf, we have to ask about the motivations for fighting in the first place. And the reality is that we often voice our concerns from a sense of entitlement rather than a sense of furthering the kingdom.

Yes, our society was founded on Judeo-Christian ethics. Yes, those principles have allowed us to develop our public structures on foundations of reason and justice and law. Yes, our beliefs have been protected so far and we have been able to assume that when an issue arises, our ethical standards and "shared Christian heritage" will step in as guardians against injustice.

That's the problem. We Christians have grown so accustomed to being protected by this system of beliefs that we have forgotten how to respond when we are not. We have grown fat, soft, and complacent and embraced an entitlement culture within our churches and in how we view public policy. More disturbingly, we expect our leaders to act and speak on our behalf from that mindset – no wonder they spend so much time and energy pleading for attention. And no wonder the world rolls its eyes when "those Christians" step onto their soapboxes and expect everyone to protect beliefs that have been fostered under a system they do not embrace and cannot relate to..

There needs to be a re-examination of our public efforts and a reduction in the amount of time we spend pleading with the world – we have far too many banging gongs and clashing cymbals obfuscating the issues rather than clarifying them.

Maybe we need to act like a persecuted church and refocus on growth and prayer – we know where churches are flourishing and where they aren't – and spreading the gospel. What if we stopped trying to fix a society that cannot be expected to be Christian forever and focused more on spreading the love of Christ? What might happen if we redirected our energies towards outreach, service, prayer and community and away from assuming everyone will shift towards what we have long been entitled? What if we stopped licking our wounds in public and just got about the business of that great mandate we have been given?

We have been blessed far beyond what the founders of our faith could possibly have imagined. We have safety, protection, and freedom espoused in the very constitutions of our societies, documents we enthusiastically cite when we feel under attack. But societies that have been supported by those principles are changing – in large part due to the justice and morality that are written into their most revered statutes – and Christianity, although still the majority, faces challenges that it needs to decide how to address when it can't use tradition as its defence.

We will not be able to fall back on our entitlement forever, and perhaps that's a very good thing – we don't need society's protection to live out our mission.

Read more about Brent van Staalduinen and his work at **brentvans.com**. *He lives in Hamilton, Ont.*

Gathering Light

Emily Wierenga

The hour of love

So we live here, but also there, straddling earth and heaven, and Cicely Saunders calls this "the hour of love." The eternal hour in which we skin our knees in prayer and fumble with forgiveness. All the while struggling to believe that we ourselves are loved.

And then things happen. Good things. Like your husband cupping your face as though you're a flower. Your son, asking to hold your hand the whole way home from the grocery store. Your aunt, calling you and telling you she wants to take the boys – the ones who arrived February 10th – every Monday, all day long.

There's the smell of a supper you didn't have to make, the bouquet he gives you at the end of a day that seems to never end, and the package in the mail – the unexpected one, the one that makes you clap your hands with the careless happiness of a child. These moments straddle time and space, these sweet-nectar moments that remind you there *is* a God, and God is good.

You find the strength to be the kind of person that fights each day for love, so that hatred cannot win. So that fear has to die, and no matter the hour, no matter the trial, you learn a peace that transcends. Knowing that you exist for more.

***

It's so difficult for us, as women, to believe we are loved. Yet, we love to no bounds. We hold you and whisper your worth into your ear and then pull away in disbelief when you try to convince us the same.

And this, because of the Garden. The place where Eve, long ago, took that piece of fruit and believed a lie that has penetrated the heart of every woman since: *God doesn't love me*. He doesn't love us enough to let us eat the forbidden fruit, the snake hissed, and she bit into it. The fruit that would poison us and make childbirth so painful and the fields so hard to till.

Because when we refuse to accept the gifts God has given us – when we refuse contentment, and begin to believe we deserve more – we trade in gratitude for resentment. And the whole picture goes black.

And when we try to believe it on our own, it's like standing in front of that forbidden tree, refusing to touch the fruit but failing to see the rest of the garden – the trees and flowers and fruits he *has* given us. The children, the husband, the house, the pantry, and we cannot do it on our own.

We cannot convince ourselves that we are loved. But we *can* turn. And once we do, we will see the many ways in which God loves us. We will see that even though he says "no" to some things, he says "yes" to so many more.

We cannot be convinced that we are loved while standing in front of the forbidden tree. And this is the meaning of repentance, no? To turn away from? We need to turn so that God can show us the breadth of his heart. We need to open our eyes to what *is*, not what *isn't*.

***

My husband tells me I'm beautiful but I look in the mirror and see crow's feet and thighs which Anne Lamott calls her "aunties." And they say if you get your skin tucked and sucked and lifted, you'll love yourself. But you won't. You'll just think you do. Love is not skin-deep, something I learned as a little girl standing in front of the mirror, counting my ribs and starving myself. Because society told me I am what I weigh. Society said, thin is beauty. But it's not.

Beauty is the belief that you are loved. A belief that cannot be found in the reflection of a mirror. The only way you can start to love yourself is to turn. To turn from the reflection in the mirror and to see the way they see you. Your husband, your kids, God – through the cupping of your face like a flower and your son asking to hold your hand and the gift of a supper you didn't have to make.

These daily provisions are God's love letters. But we have to have eyes to see, and ears to hear. So, as the song goes, "Turn, turn, turn…."

*Emily Wierenga (***emilywierenga.com***), pictured here with her husband and boys, lives in Neerlandia Alta.*

News

Six weeks of daily prayer primes CRC prayer summit

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (CRCNA) – The Christian Reformed Church's office in Grand Rapids, Mich., launched a daily work-day prayer meeting early this month to be held over the six weeks leading up to a first-of-its-kind, denomination-wide "prayer summit" in April.

About 30 people gathered for the first time in a conference room at 7 a.m. on Friday, March 2, to pray. Many lived nearby but some drove from as far away as 50 miles to participate. Over those six weeks they will be praying for the success of the prayer summit to be held April 16-18 at All Nations Church in Lake View Terrace, California. But the focus is also much broader: to pray especially for the Christian Reformed Church, its congregations, pastors and its ministries – but also for the world.

The prayer summit was proposed late last year by the Korean Council of Christian Reformed Churches as a way to show appreciation, especially through prayer, for all that the CRC has done and meant to Korean congregations. The summit's goal is for participants "to pray together for the movement of God's Spirit and Christ's leading in our lives, our families, our churches, our ministries, our cities, our nations and the world," according to the prayer summit website.

The March 2 session was led by Joel Boot and Moses Chung. Boot is the executive director of the CRC and Chung is the director of Christian Reformed Home Missions.

Revival starts with prayer

Boot related the story of 19th century lay missionary Jeremiah Calvin Lanphier, a member of the North Dutch Reformed Church in New York. Lanphier began a noon prayer meeting in September 1857 in a building in what is now Lower Manhattan. At first only a few people attended. But over the next few weeks, more and more people started to come, and soon meetings were being held all over the city. It wasn't long after that that the Fulton Street Prayer Meeting expanded into a full-fledged revival of prayer in communities across the country, lasting well into the 20th century.

Moses Chung said, "There is a special power in agreeing to come together for prayer. Jesus' power and presence are there even when two or three people are gathered. When we fix our eyes on Jesus and we learn how to pray together, there is great unity in the group."

Chung invites CRC congregations and other groups to consider holding similar meetings wherever they are, to pray in agreement and in the same spirit for the CRC and its ministries. "Our hope and dream is that prayer meetings will begin all across North America in our congregations from the grassroots levels. That the prayer summit will be an encouraging, catalytic and ground-breaking event to spark such local movements. By starting at the denominational headquarters, we want to lead by example. We are not just praying for the summit, but … we will pray for CRC congregations and ministries everyday."

Netherlands considers expansion of 'very strict' suicide law

Marian Van Til, *with files from CWN, Press Europe*

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (CWN) – The Dutch parliament is debating whether to legalize assisted suicide for those 70 and older who are "tired of living." The current euthanasia law in the Netherlands, passed 10 years ago, allows people 12 years old or older to request assisted suicide when they are terminally ill and are in "unbearable pain."

"The elderly are asking for the right to assisted suicide," said the left-wing Dutch daily *De Volksrant* as the parliament began discussing a bill presented through a citizens' group called Uit Vrije Wil ("Their Free Will'").

In four months Uit Vrije Wil gathered 120,000 signatures, including those of many political leaders, in support of the bill to allow assisted suicide for people over 70 if they consider themselves to be "finished with life." The group asserts that the current law is "very strict" because it applies only to those "in unbearable pain and with no other outcome."

The proposed bill "is a strong sign of the times," said *De Volksrant* in a lead story. The paper called relaxing the current euthanasia law "a pressing social issue," though it believes the new bill has no chance to be adopted by the Dutch parliament.

It was *De Volksrant's* opinion that members of the government and the Christian-Democrats are "at the heart of power and impede all debate" on the issue, and because they want "to keep the peace, the conservative VVD (People's Party for Freedom and Democracy) does not want this hot potato." The result, in the paper's view, is that "while the issue is discussed in the society at large, the political discussion is frozen."

De Volksrant interviewed six prominent, elderly Dutch people who all agreed that people over 70, like themselves, should be able to get professional medical assistance to help them die if they are "tired of living." Mies Bouman, a well-known TV presenter, insisted that everyone deserves "respectful and professional help to end their lives if they request it. It is their right."

Another Dutch paper, *Trouw,* came out against expanding the law. It gave a prominent place to the views of a Christian Union MP, using the ironic headline "It's been *nice*?" *Trouw* was begun during World War II by Christians in the Dutch underground. In 2005 the paper defined itself as one that will continue to be "rooted in the Christian tradition" and "a source of contemplation and inspiration for everyone, churchgoer or not, who feels a need for moral and spiritual orientation."

U.S.: CRWRC responds to deadly spring tornadoes

HARRISBURG, Ind. (CRCNA) – Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC) disaster relief managers immediately began determining how best to respond to the massive damage caused in Harrisburg, Ind., and other communities following the deadly storms that swept across 11 states earlier this month.

At least six people were killed and many injured when an EF-4 tornado carrying winds of up to 170 miles per hour leveled parts of Harrisburg, a town of 9,000 people. That storm was part of a series of tornadoes that cut a destructive swath through the American Midwest and South. Besides Indiana, states damaged in the storms include Illinois, Ohio, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina, Kentucky and Tennessee, according to the U.S. National Weather Service.

In Alabama, CRWRC's volunteer construction teams, who are still repairing homes damaged caused by April tornadoes nearly a year ago, had to leave their work sites and take cover.

CRWRC disaster managers Ed and Helen Mulder arrived in Harrisburg on Friday, March 2, to make early damage assessments and co-ordinate with government and voluntary organizations. Given the extent of the damage, CRWRC said that, along with Harrisburg, it plans to assess damage in communities in Kentucky and Illinois. More than 500 homes in a five-county area of Illinois alone were severely damaged or destroyed, said CRWRC Disaster Response Services (DRS) director Bill Adams.

Tornado damage in Harrisburg, Indiana.

Much to be done

As federal, state and local disaster officials worked in 11 states to get an overview of the damage and death toll, CRWRC continued discussions with FEMA (the Federal Emergency Management Agency) and National VOAD (Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster) "in order to determine how we can best send help," said Adams.

Meanwhile, across the affected area hundreds of National Guard troops conducted searches and rescues, provided debris removal, traffic control and patrols, gave aviation support, helped evacuate people with injuries and delivered critically needed medications.

CRWRC is the disaster response, relief and development agency of the Christian Reformed Church in North America. Its volunteer services include recovery planning and capacity building, needs assessments, home repair and construction in disaster locations across the U.S. and Canada.

Canadians wishing to support CRWRC-DRS may call 1-800-730-3490, mail a cheque marked "CRWRC Spring Storms 2012" to CRWRC, 3475 Mainway, Burlington ON L7R 3Y8, or go to the "Donate" tab at **crwrc.org.**

Nigeria: Islamists plan kidnap campaign against women as part of 'liquidating' Christians

LAGOS, Nigeria (CCO/Bikya Masr) – The Islamist terrorist group that has threatened to eradicate Christianity in northern Nigeria has announced that it will kidnap Christian women to further its aims.

"We are going to put into action new efforts to strike fear into the Christians of the power of Islam by kidnapping their women," said a spokesman for Boko Haram. The group's purpose is to "liquidate" Christians from Nigeria.

"We will demand [the women] as ransom that the families leave our Islamic areas," the spokesman said. "We will create so much effort to end the Christian presence in our push to have a proper Islamic state that the Christians won't be able to stay." He did not elaborate on when or how this new "campaign of terror" would take place, but it is already accomplishing part of its goal: to strike fear into Nigerian Christians.

"Kidnapping is very serious and dangerous. After all the bombings and violence, I don't know what we would do," Markos, a Christian living in Lagos, told Bikyamasr.com.

Ending the Christian presence

According to the same Boko Haram spokesman, his group "will launch a number of attacks, coordinated and part of the plan to eradicate Christians from certain parts of the country." Boko Haram has already taken responsibility for a number of the bomb attacks on Christian churches across the country since a Christmas Day bombing left dozens of people dead.

The Nigerian government has promised to crack down on

See **Campaign** *on page 9*

News

New ed act in Alberta: Homeschoolers, faith-based schools can't teach biblical principles that interfere with 'diversity'

EDMONTON, Alberta (Life Site News) – Under Alberta's new Education Act, homeschoolers and faith-based schools will not be permitted to teach, as part of their academic program, that homosexual acts are sinful, says the spokesperson for Education Minister Thomas Lukaszuk.

"Whatever the nature of schooling – homeschool, private school, Catholic school – we do not tolerate disrespect for differences," Donna McColl, Lukaszuk's assistant director of communications, told LifeSiteNews. "You can affirm the family's ideology in your family life, you just can't do it as part of your educational study and instruction."

Reacting to the remarks, Paul Faris of the Home School Legal Defence Association (HSLDA) said the Ministry of Education is "clearly signalling that they are in fact planning to violate the private conversations families have in their own homes. A government that seeks that sort of control over our personal lives should be feared and opposed," he added.

The HSLDA and other homeschooling groups warned that the new Alberta Education Act, which was re-tabled by Alison Redford's Progressive Conservative government on Feb. 14th to replace the existing School Act, threatens to mandate "diversity" education in all schools, including home schools.

Section 16 of the new legislation restates the current School Act's requirement that schools "reflect the diverse nature" of Alberta in their curriculum, but it adds that they must also "honour and respect" the controversial Alberta Human Rights Act that has been used to target Christians with traditional beliefs on homosexuality. "School" is defined to include homeschoolers and private schools in addition to publicly funded school boards.

McColl emphasized that homeschoolers were already included in the current definition of "school" in the School Act, going back to 1988 or longer. And Section 16, she said, "is specifically with regards to programs, courses and instructional materials."

Must separate school and faith

According to McColl, Christian homeschooling families can continue to impart biblical teachings on homosexuality in their homes, "as long as it's not part of their academic program of studies and instructional materials. What they want to do about their ideology elsewhere, that's their family business. But a fundamental nature of our society is to respect diversity," she added.

Pressed about what the precise distinction is between homeschoolers' instruction and their family life, McColl said the question involved "real nuances" and she would have to get back with specifics.

But in a second interview, McColl said the government "won't speculate" about particular examples, and explained that she had not yet gotten a "straight answer" on what exactly constitutes "disrespect." She did say that families "can't be hate-mongering, if you will."

In the first interview, she justified the government's position by pointing to the recent Supreme Court ruling upholding the Quebec government's refusal to exempt families from its controversial ethics and religious culture program. That program, which aims to present the spectrum of world religions and lifestyle choices from a "neutral" stance, is required of all students, including homeschoolers.

Pro-family observers warned that the ruling risked emboldening other provincial governments in their effort to impose "diversity" programs. The last two years have seen major battles in Quebec, Ontario, British Columbia and now Alberta over the increasing normalization of homosexuality in the schools.

The Supreme Court's narrow ruling did not specifically address homeschooling, however, and left the door open to further court challenges. The court argued that the Quebec family seeking the exemption had simply failed to meet the burden of proof necessary to show that their children's participation in the course would impede the parents' ability to raise the children in their Catholic faith.

Education happens 24/7

Patty Marler, government liaison for the Alberta Home Education Association, said she was surprised at the Ministry's straightforwardness, and questioned how they are going to be able to draw the line between school time and family time. "We educate our children all the time, and that's just the way we live. It's a lifestyle," she said. "Making that distinction between the times when we're homeschooling and when we're just living is really hard to do. Throw in the fact that I do use the Bible as part of my curriculum and now I'm very blatantly going to be teaching stuff that will be against [the human rights act]."

Marler pointed out that the issue has direct implications on how families teach their children about marriage because the Alberta Human Rights Act was amended in 2009 to define marriage as between two "persons" instead of a man and a woman. "When I read Genesis and it talks about marriage being one man in union with one woman, I am very, very clearly opposing the human rights act that says its one person marrying another person," she said.

According to Faris, the issue with McColl's statements "isn't about sexuality or anything else on the gay issue, it's about the government trying to control how we teach our own children in our own homes."

The PC government has 67 of the 83 seats in the Alberta legislature, so the bill's passage is essentially assured. But an election is imminent and the new, more conservative Wildrose Alliance Party is expected to have a strong showing. A recent Forum Research poll showed the upstart party polling at 30 percent behind the government's 37 percent.

The Home School Legal Defence Association is calling on Alberta citizens to contact the Education Minister and their elected representatives to the protest.

Campaign *continued*

the group and has deployed military units across the country in an attempt to curtail its activities, arresting and killing a number of members in recent weeks. But the Boko Haram spokesman asserted that the government "cannot be prepared for what is to come." Without giving specifics he continued, "We will create so much effort to end the Christian presence in our push to have a proper Islamic state that the Christians won't be able to stay."

On March 9 the group killed three of its own members in an explosion in the northeastern state of Maiduguri, police and military sources confirmed. "This was part of our planning and it is unfortunate," said the spokesman. It was unclear whether the deaths were accidental or deliberate in retaliation for undisclosed transgressions. There were several earlier explosions in suspected Boko Haram bomb-making factories in the northern cities of Damaturu and Kaduna in recent months.

Since mid-2009, violence blamed on the militant group, which has called for an Islamic state in Nigeria, has claimed more than 1,000 lives, including more than 300 in these first few months of 2012, according to rights groups.

'Momentous ecumenical occasion': Westminster, Sistine choirs to join for June performance

Sistine choir (above) will sing together with the Westminster choir (below).

VATICAN CITY (Zenit) – In June, the Choir of the Church of England's Westminster Abbey in London is due to sing alongside the Vatican's Sistine Choir (Cappella Musicale Pontificia) in an event that will be broadcast across the world. The Westminster Choir, directed by James O'Donnell, was invited to Rome through the director of the Sistine Choir, Monsignor Massimo Palombella.

A joint press release notes that "this momentous ecumenical occasion is the first time in its over-500 year history that the Sistine Chapel Choir has joined forces with another choir." The invitation to Rome came after Benedict XVI visited the Abbey in September 2010 when he attended Evening Prayer and prayed at the tomb of St. Edward the Confessor with Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams, as part of his State visit to England and Scotland.

The Archbishop of Canterbury noted then that St. Peter is the "patron saint" of both the Vatican Basilica and Westminster Abbey. Therefore, he said, "celebrating together his apostolic witness and example is a powerful reminder of the call that our churches share to be faithful to the apostolic fullness of the Gospel today."

The two choirs will together sing at First Vespers in the Basilica of St. Paul's Outside-the-Walls on June 28 and at Mass in the Vatican Basilica on the morning of June 29. The Westminster Abbey Choir will also travel to the Benedictine monastery at Montecassino to sing Vespers and Mass with the monastic community at the burial place of St Benedict. It was Benedictine monks who established a tradition of daily worship that continues to this day in Westminster Abbey, founded in the year 960.

The Choir of Westminster Abbey is renowned worldwide as one of the finest choirs of its type. It is comprised of about 30 boys (all of whom attend the abbey's dedicated residential choir school) and 12 professional adult singers (known as lay vicars). The choir plays a central role both in the daily choral services in the Abbey and in the many royal, state and national occasions which take place there.

Column

Flowers and Thistles

Curt Gesch

Apple trees, no pruning required

I was drowsing in my chair after early-morning breakfast when I heard my wife say, "Now where is that camera?" I figured she was trying to get a good close-up of a pine grosbeak. Later, I checked the digital camera and found that she had taken a beautiful picture of a moose in our yard. "Ah, nature," I thought.

That first photo was taken from 34 feet (10m). I looked at the rest of the photos and saw "my" moose posing for pictures as she (I think it was a cow) contentedly munched on the terminal shoots of our three apple trees. Some shoots didn't come off easily so she ripped them off with the supporting branches as well. "Kill the moose!" I thought.

The next morning I didn't drowse in my chair, but looked out the garage door: the moose was back. I decided to shoot a shotgun blast into the air (don't try this in Mississauga) to scare the moose away, but she just looked at me from about 36 feet away. At this point my dog, which had been soundly sleeping in his doghouse, ran towards me. Chester is scared stiff of thunder and gunshots. The moose then ambled off, hurried along with my exhortations to keep watch "for you never know when your time on this earth has come."

For two days, no moose, but then … the moose decided to bring along her calf and go to work on the weeping willow trees. I raced for a gun, thinking to shoot them in the backside with light shot at a distance just far enough to sting, but not close enough to break the skin. By the time I got the gun and ammo from the locked cabinets, the two moose had run through the backyard, around the guesthouse, into the pasture and were trotting through the hayfield towards the poplars. "I have struck fear into the mighty moose by my ferocious mien," I thought.

Since then the moose haven't eaten any twigs in the yard. When Chester is awake he chases them away (as long as there are no guns in evidence). They have moved to the cows' feeding area, cleaning up loose hay from where I feed the cows in the field. They also occasionally go into the cowshed, roust out the cows, and eat hay from the mangers inside. I'm thinking of making a crèche with Mary, Joseph, the baby Jesus, two moose, four deer, one magpie, and two ravens in attendance.

Backyard habitat

The problem of wildlife in my garden is quite ironic, because my farm and garden is also listed as an official "backyard habitat" and I have (somewhere) a certificate to prove that I invite wildlife into my yard.

But my problem with wildlife is not unique. In many parts of North America, deer are common pests in rural, urban and suburban areas. Shrub catalogues have separate categories of "deer-proof shrubs." Deer love crocuses and tulips but not daffodils, so invest in daffs if you are a bulb grower.

In British Columbia, deer are becoming such a problem in some areas that "culls" (i.e., killing a lot of them) have been proposed in cities like Cranbrook, Kimberley and Invermere. Cranbrook has already culled 25 deer, but the proposed cull in Invermere is on hold pending appeals and protests.

There are several possible options for dealing with large herbivores like deer, moose and elk. One is simply keeping them out. This means fences. Farmers in many areas build wire fences eight feet high to exclude deer and elk from stored hay crops. A newer type of fence, called 3-D fencing is much cheaper and may enable farmers to exclude large wild herbivores from entire fields. Fencing works in limited situations. And whether it is wise to think of Canada as a land of enclosures, rather than a land of wildlife corridors is worth consideration. If fencing is used in suburban and urban areas, there is not much doubt that an even-more fragmented urban population will result. *Laager mentality* is possible, but probably not helpful, except in particular circumstances.

Moose looking ashamed, but actually her mane tells us that she is a bit angry to be driven away from her snack. Don't mess with her when she has this posture.

Animal relocation is also an option. Live-trapping and relocation is possible, but it is very expensive and of limited use for high-population species – there is no available habitat that is not already occupied (biologists often run out of available habitat even for black bears). Sending the deer to Parliament Hill or introducing raccoons to the interior of B.C. Place Stadium are not viable options.

Still, there are times when live-trapping or other forms of limited culling can perform dual functions. In some places, venison from culled deer forms a significant contribution to food relief (the Salvation Army, for example). I suppose we could provide most of the missing protein to famine-struck countries with raccoon, rabbit and Canada goose meat.

Other options

Biological control is another possibility. Sometimes natural enemies can control wildlife, but with larger animals this is not a realistic option in heavily-populated areas. People on Vancouver Island may have been surprised that the number one prey of cougars is raccoons. I doubt that Toronto wants to establish a free-ranging cougar population, however. People in Kitimat, B.C., recently encountered a natural control for free-ranging house cats: wolverines.

Eradication is perhaps the most severe option. Although it will likely not be successful in removing deer or elk populations permanently, there is some sentiment that total removal of certain wildlife species from limited areas may be the best temporary solution. As suggested above, most people already support a *de facto* eradication of large predators from suburban and urban areas. Whether tourists would support eradication of elk from Banff or Jasper town sites is another matter.

Damage to apple shoots.

My backyard moose loves it when greener-than-thou people suggest "just letting nature take its course." She (the moose) and they (the nature-balance folks) are not so sanguine when either hunting seasons or vehicle-moose collisions occur.

On our farm we are presently feeding five cows, about seven mule deer and one white-tailed deer, plus "my" moose and her calf. As long as the moose stays out of the garden and yard, it is the sort of compromise we can live with. We feed a little extra hay, but we give the moose some pelletized reasons for avoiding the apple trees.

Our situation is not typical of people in suburban or urban areas. The recent controversies over culling deer in British Columbia suggest that public discussions often result in nasty confrontations in the heat of the moment. I suggest that a series of town hall meetings, presentations by biologists, naturalists and hunters, First Nations information and local story-telling could go a long way towards coming to a consensus in a given area.

Will earth-keepers of the tradition of Calvin de Witt and the A Rocha organization take the lead in sponsoring such discussion? Will Christians join the public discussion and insist on civility rather than polarization? I hope so.

Curt Gesch (cgesch63@gmail.com) can see four mule deer eating hay with the cows from his desk. He lives in Quick, B.C., far from Cranbrook.

Reformed worship *continued from page 6*

projects about church architecture. There are wonderful experiments by congregations looking for new ways to enhance hospitality, to improve environmental sustainability and to reinforce the idea that God works among us through Word, font and table. We are excited about these!

There are also, unfortunately, a lot of new buildings which reinforce the idea the worship is a performance to watch, and which seem strangely "cold" and inhospitable.

Planning liturgies can be difficult and time-consuming. What advice do you have for churches that rely on volunteers for this important work? How do you avoid burnout? How do you identify and cultivate people's liturgical gifts?

Structure your planning, whenever possible, to be sustainable over time. This may involve having different teams work on different seasons of the year, using one basic approach or liturgy for a few weeks in a row, or some other strategy that seems manageable.

It is important to note that planning worship requires aptitudes, virtues and skills that need to be cultivated over time. Congregations can help planners avoid burn-out by supporting their learning and growth by providing resources, making it possible for volunteers to attend a worship conference or webinar and offering encouragement and conversation about their work. Warm expressions of thanks can make such a difference!

Michael Buma, interim editor of CC lives in Mt Brydges, Ont., with his wife and two sons.

Column/Feature

From the 11th Province

Marian Van Til

Who do you say I am?

"Who do the crowds say I am?" Jesus asked his disciples (Mark 8:28, Luke 9:18). You know the answer: John the Baptist, Elijah, one of the prophets. Jesus asked in order to get to his real point: Who do *you* say I am?

Peter answered readily and rightly for them all, and us: "You are the Christ of God." He meant: "You are the Anointed One, the Messiah sent of God." That confession encapsulates all that Scripture teaches about who Christ is: Son of the Father, the Saviour, Creator, Judge; God himself, who lives in eternal, intimate fellowship with the Father and the Spirit.

In the ancient Nicene Creed, distilled from the teachings of Scripture, we confess, "I believe in one God, the Father almighty"; "in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten of the Father before all worlds"; "in the Holy Spirit … who proceeds from the Father and the Son."

At its outset the *Heidelberg Catechism* summarizes the gist of biblical faith very personally: "What is your only comfort in life and death?" And each of us answers: *That I am not my own, but belong – body and soul, in life and in death – to my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ.* We go on, in the same answer, to explain the implications. Later, the catechism explains why Jesus our mediator must be truly human, truly righteous *and* true God. And we confess that God has revealed himself in his Word as "three distinct persons in one, true, eternal God."

Why am I reviewing such fundamental stuff? Because in our increasingly apostate age with its multitude of gods and faiths a reminder may be in order about what kind of God we serve. Would the historic church and the apostles and prophets recognize the God of the modern church? At least since the Enlightenment some Christians have been shrugging off the biblical truth about God as too exclusive (and judgmental). But what about those of us who still take the Bible seriously? Increasingly one sees less-than-biblical ideas and attitudes about God among leaders in traditionally orthodox groups (evangelical, Catholic, Reformed). An example I want to highlight: a seemingly favourite idea is that Muslims and Christians worship the same God.

Emphatically, we do not. Late last month Rick Warren (pastor in California, author of *The Purpose Driven Life*) got himself into trouble by implying that he believes we do. He was addressing a Muslim audience about his "King's Way" program designed as "a path to end the 1,400 years of misunderstanding between Muslims and Christians."

One-way street

If his intent is to build friendships and work with Muslims on social issues we can agree on (and pave the way for the Gospel), that is a fine and needed thing. But even the Muslims who run the **onislam.net** website reported afterwards that Warren has "embarked on an effort to heal divisions between evangelical Christians and Muslims by partnering with Southern California mosques and proposing a set of theological principles that includes acknowledging that Christians and Muslims worship the same God." It took Warren a week to get around to saying, well, no, that's not really what I meant.

It is telling that Muslim converts to Christ instantly recognize that Allah, who they once served, is not the God of the Bible. For example, E. Abraham, a former Muslim who grew up in Iraq under Saddam Hussein said in the context of the latest Rick Warren debate: "I know for sure that YHWH is *not* Allah. It seems that [North] American Christian leaders have adopted a 'Nice Theology' at all cost, even at the cost of the identity of Jesus Christ. This approach is a one-way street. You never see Muslims or imams do this. Growing up as a Muslim, we were taught that the God of the Christian was not Allah. This belief is well-known in the Muslim world. Muslims in the West go along with this ignorance because there is an agenda to spread Islam. People like Warren are helping this agenda by his own naive belief and approaches. This makes me sad, insulted, and I know God is not pleased with this type of compromise."

The influential pastor Rick Warren suggested that Christians and Muslims serve the same God.

The biblical God is eternally Father, Son and Holy Spirit, God of both mercy and justice, who saves us wholly by his grace, not our works. None of that applies to Allah. The Apostle Paul is adamant that the true children of Abraham are those who embrace Christ, love and obey him – and *thus* fulfill the works of the law. I pray *we* have not become more concerned about offending non-Christian neighbours (who desperately need the Christ of the Gospel, as we all do) than offending the holy Lord God and defending the infinite glory of his name.

The God of Abraham praise, who reigns enthrone above,
the Ancient of eternal days, the God of love!
The Lord, the great I AM, by earth and heaven confessed –
we bow before his holy name forever blest.

The whole triumphant host give thanks to God on high.
"Hail Father, Son and Holy Ghost!" they ever cry.
Hail, Abr'ham's God and mine! I join the heavenly lays:
All might and majesty are thine and endless praise.

Thomas Olivers, 1725-1799

Marian Van Til (mvantil@roadrunner.com) is a former CC editor living in Youngstown N.Y.

Artful Eye

Pansies

After the frost and the first, bitter cold rain
in the blue-glazed pot back on the steps
and largely forgot, a green thing remains
that starts anew, unlike the faded asters,
or the tomato reduced to leggy straw
and fallen fruit, even less the yellowed
marigolds still in denial at garden's end.
The revived leaf, bud and painted flower
mark less the time of old summer and sure
winter, but the grace of remembered Spring
and mustard-scaled seed left to heat and secret
growth, so matter of fact against all reason,
to testify by petal and guarded green
that growth is no mistake, and hope unseen
yet has its time and keeps its season.

William Harris

William Harris lives in Grand Rapids where he walks his dog, helps his wife, writes the occasional poem, and teaches speech at Cornerstone University.

Pansy Photo Credit

Deborah and Murray DeBoer are parents to seven children, three of whom were recently adopted from the Philippines. Their photography business is called Lavender Rise Photography.

Features

This Little Light of Mine

Sometimes I think of him, this kid I'd see on the curb
outside the coffee shop, not leering, not kicking around
his skateboard – sitting, smoking
his cigarette down. Who am I to say what hunger is. Once
in the driveway, waiting for the school bus
I smoked a stick pretzel with my garish
breath puffing into the air and when my sister
ratted me out to my folks that night I squeezed
an entire tube of toothpaste onto the toy horses whose manes
she brushed each morning with the tiniest brush,
whose plastic bodies she bent to the trough, whose names
she selected from the Old Testament. This boy, furtive as a bird,
still sitting, would pick up others' rubbed-
out bits, reach around, behind the hostas, pinch
the butts between his fingers and into his empty coffee cup. Dozens.
He slouches, fills the cup, patient, and, seeing me,
doesn't smile, won't imply, *Not all of us*
litter. I nod through the window anyway, slow, my face,
I imagine, a map of gratitude. Why do I imagine. Who
am I to say what is decent, Jedidiah, Deborah, Dinah and Abednego
smeared with a snail-path's gel, blue and white,
fluoride-additive on their dark, impenetrable coats, their unheard
whinnies and nickers and hooves
on the carpeted earth the sounds
of my sister's own heart, murmured and wary, spare
as a stable, warning my parents – I know
now, flickered clear, for love – to quiet deviance in the cavity
of my lungs, righteous, hovering, hung.

Inclement Sonnet

Tell me snow is falling on the willows now, fat, full, unhurried,
for my strawberry-haired nephew sleeps, his body beneath
a blanket knit brilliantly blue, his body wilted with
neuroblastoma, and here on the couch, I hold his head

and wonder at what's sent from above, what we'd
believe drifts down during these months of ice, so far north
we need Easter to end winter for us – not Eostre, Teutonic myth,
vernal equinox, not eggs, red-iris bunnies, beribboned

sweets. Tell me what comes next: tires spinning, marrow
aspirating, gladiolus whispering *when, when*, Wednesday
ashing our brows and, for each, some coruscating stretch, most

Fridays not so good after all. Last week he told his mum, *I get a new*
body if I go to heaven. Tell me it's coming soon, Pascha Sunday,
that, as they lift, our arms will ache, will awaken, with all we've lost.

Susanna Childress' first book, Jagged with Love, *was awarded the Brittingham Prize in Poetry; her second book,* Entering the House of Awe, *was published last fall by New Issues Press. Childress lives in Holland, MI, where she and her husband, Josh Banner, work at Hope College; they have a toddler son, a second baby due in June, two rescued dachshund-poodles, a garden and a worm farm.*

We Take the Sky

We take the sky, as if red is something we could own,
something we might find in the stillest moments,
as if the earth is humane and wouldn't break
our bones. (None of His were broken. Not one.)

Red is in the land too, is in the way we look at each other, the hardness
of our sleep, the need to fall down, to tell of the pox that swept Aunt Jess,
the drink that ushers Father, the path that never leads to wealth or rest
or health – but the one we always take. *Shalom,* we say. *Buena Suerte.*

We always take the sky, fold it over ourselves,
the soil, run it across our skin and cling to it,
savoring the tart of a lemon, palming a bar of soap
even when our hands are clean, naming the insects

that fly across the white bulb of moon late at night,
rakishly loving the one who knows our smell,
saying (as if they are not questions), *Isn't this how*
we stay alive and *Why shouldn't I burrow here.*

This is how we drum on, cold and ungrowing –
what more to be than alive? It all hums: so we die in small bits,
so the egg-shaped hollow that sits behind our stomachs,
so He died and rose again on the third day, so (what).

We take the sky, we scatter on the land. We fall down,
grab the everythings, the tiniest cures, fall down again,
wash ourselves in red and know, unwittingly, it is not enough.
More certain than anything: it will never be,

and then here, in the stillest moments, the story rushes again
(veil splitting, stone rolling, Mary, Peter, John, running,
linen and spices like a limp cocoon, the blur of angels, the one red
splash of a second – like a rose breaking open – when we know),

and somewhere inside us a small green seed pricks the dirt,
coiling for air. He soothes and stirs, fingertip-sized holes in His
hands, roaming the soil and the sky for our broken bones.
And the shaking on earth is our brand new lives:

Alleluia, we say, feeling even the empty oval of our stomachs rise.

Poem reprinted with permission from *Jagged with Love* (University of Wisconsin Press, 2005).

Cemetery Voice

Wayne Brouwer

Our Easter Sunrise worship services in Southern Alberta were held in a cemetery. It was difficult to gather in the dark, since neither mountains nor forests hid the springtime sun, and the high desert plains lay open to almost ceaselessly unclouded skies. Still, we mumbled in hushed whispers as we acknowledged one another, and saved our booming tones for the final rousing chorus of "Up from the grave he arose … !"

I don't care?

"A grave is a sobering thing," said Wordsworth. We try to mark each with snippets of meaning that will defuse the scandalous superficiality of life that Emily bemoaned in Thornton Wilder's *Our Town*. "If I was so quickly done for," asks the wee voice etched on a child's grave memorial, "what on earth was I begun for?"

Ancient Romans tossed away the scandal of our brief and meaningless lives. When archaeologists first sifted through graveyards of the early centuries of the great Empire, they were caught up short by a plethora of burial plot stones inscribed with the same seven letters: N F F N S N C. These certainly spelled no known Latin word and other connections escaped would-be interpreters. Until, that is, they uncovered older quadrants of cemeteries where many grave markers carried seven-word inscriptions beginning with these otherwise meaningless letters: *Non Fui. Fui. Non Sum. Non Curo.* Suddenly the intent was clear. So many Romans had found this phrase as the best representation of life and death that even poor people with small stones could abbreviate it down to just seven letters and all would understand: "I was not. I was. I am not. I don't care."

Tragic. cynical. hopeless.

I have officiated at hundreds of funerals over the past 35 years and never met a family which would have dared place that testimony over the grave of a loved one. We cry. We weep. We wail. One young man even jumped on top of the casket as it was being lowered into the cold earth, pounding in horrible grief on the unforgiving final home of his brother's body.

Even when death is "good," and an elderly grandmother slips willingly from time into eternity, tears of loss trace our cheeks. We were born to live, not to die.

That is why those same archaeologists of ancient Roman artefacts were equally surprised by some of the memorials found next to the burial niches in the catacombs where Christians laid their dead. There were inscribed verses of scripture, to be sure, but also symbols and pictures. The one, however, that most mystified showed the upper body of a man holding a harp. It seemed to represent Jesus, but standard mythological representations usually tied this one to Orpheus.

The song of Orpheus

Orpheus was the darling of Greek love and music and tragedy. Orpheus was the master musician of his time, and well could have had 39 out of the top 40 tunes on the charts at once. When Orpheus sang, the birds swooped in just to flit on his lilting melodies. When Orpheus sang, the clouds rolled back from the skies and the sun shone more brightly and the beasts crept out of the shadows to dance their fancy footwork. When Orpheus came to town, people floated out of homes and shops to jig in the streets and fall in love.

Of course, when Orpheus himself fell in love, passion intensified. It was Eurydice who caught his eye and heart, and before long they were fawning and fainting after one another. When Orpheus and Eurydice wed, the world shimmered with significance, and couples everywhere twitterpated.

But a week later all meaning was lost. While Eurydice romped with her friends through a field, a snake slithered through the grass and struck her heal. Almost instantly Eurydice was gone, robbed of her nascent marriage and life itself.

Deep in grief, the song died in Orpheus' heart. Now

Orpheus and Eurydice, *Sir Edward John Poynter, 1862.*

he only moaned and groaned, and the world hung heavy with pain. Willows drooped their branches in empathy, and the wild beasts slunk back into the shadows. Dark clouds covered the sun's smile, and birds roosted, unable to take flight in the oppressive air.

Orpheus moped and wallowed. Consolation fled. Lament took the orchestra's podium.

Reaching for nerves that rejected grief's cancerous alloy, Orpheus set out on a mission to the undiscovered country. He found the door to the Underworld and slid down, down, down, down, down into the Kingdom of Death. Confronting elusive Hades, Orpheus demanded back the woman he had loved too shortly. Hades, of course, would have none of it. His contracts were lethally binding.

So Orpheus did what only he could do. He sang a love song. Strumming his harp, Orpheus put his heart to music in a way that sent shivers through the shifting shades and shadows. As his voice reverberated against the wailing walls, one ghost began to thicken and color. A few more stanzas of *amore* and Eurydice stood solid before him once again. They kissed and hugged and held hands all the way to earth's surface, gripped by smiles of incredulous ardor.

A Christian Orpheus?

The legend of Orpheus grew over time, so that even the most skeptical linked his name to true love. But why would early Christians reconfigure Jesus in the guise of Orpheus? How could they profane the sacred so scandalously?

Obviously they did not believe in Orpheus. They were martyrs of Christ, and traded all trite tales of the marketplace to buy the Pearl of Great Price. But some metaphors command instant understanding, and when these groaning souls recalled the words and deeds of Jesus, it was precisely in the cemetery that conflating Orpheus and Christ made perfect sense.

Christians remembered the day when Jesus traveled to Bethany to mourn his friend Lazarus' death. Jesus should have been there earlier to heal Lazarus of his illness and stay Death's untimely call, and everybody knew it. Lazarus' sister Martha came blazing out of the town when she heard that Jesus was approaching. She had sent word of Lazarus' illness to Jesus while there was still time for the Great One to make a difference like he did with so many others throughout Palestine. But Jesus had dithered and dallied, and now Martha was angry.

"If you had been here my brother wouldn't have had to die!" she shouted at Jesus. He knew she was right, and did not try to defend himself. In great grief they lumbered slowly to the family home. Professional wailers at the door assaulted their ears, accusing Jesus with fiery eyes. Stooping to enter, Jesus found the other sibling, Mary, covered with torn rags and ashes. "If you had been here my brother wouldn't have had to die!" she simpered, cutting Jesus deeper than her sister's diatribe.

A Shepherd's voice

Jesus cared without self-defence, and brought his entourage out to the cemetery. Only a week before he had inspired the Galilee crowds with his delightful homily about shepherds, getting knowing nods about the nasty hirelings who lead sheep astray and bring them into the fold of Death, the baddest shepherd of all. Leaning on the best of Israelite heritage, Jesus mounted the shoulders of Shepherd Boy/King David, and reclaimed the dignity of the office Ezekiel celebrated in chapter 34 of his prophecy. Jesus said his sheep knew his voice and would follow him anywhere. He also mentioned, cryptically, that he had other sheep, not of the flock in front of him, and that he had to go and call them.

The disciples must have thought about these things as they now stood with Jesus in the local cemetery. He challenged the keepers of the place, demanding that they roll back the stone covering the carved cavern where Lazarus' body had been laid, allowing the maggots to do their work. The cemetery tenders shook their heads. "You don't want to do that," they replied. "He stinks!"

But Jesus repeated his request with demanding authority and the workers shrugged. When the grave yawned, it burped Death's stench. Only Jesus did not cringe and retreat. Standing resolutely in the land of the living, he cried out with the voice of the Good Shepherd to his friend now

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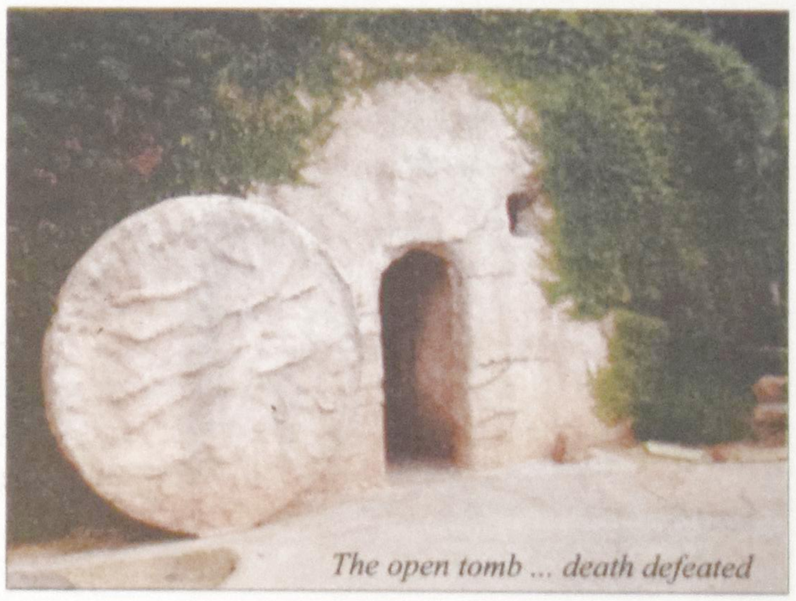
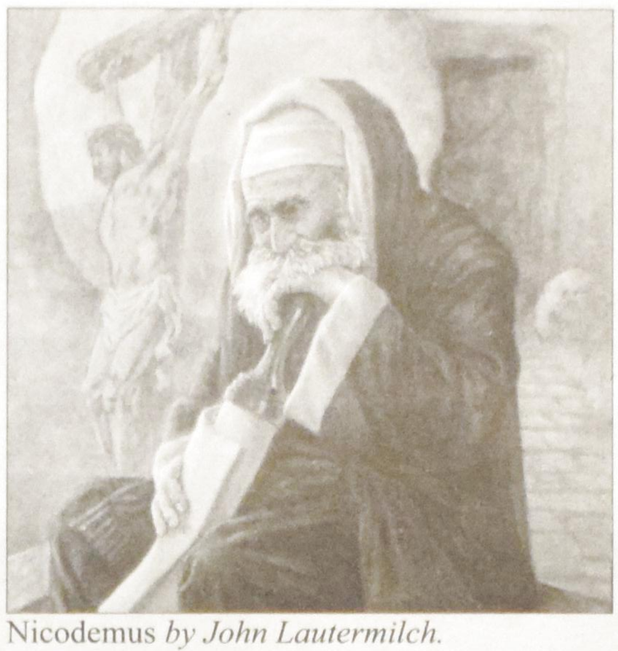


The open tomb ... death defeated

Features

Good Friday


Nicodemus *by John Lautermilch.*

They usually misunderstand me
saying I slipped through the dusk
to visit Jesus on the sly –
but it was not at all like that,
that's not the way it went:
first we had a heated debate
in the Sanhedrin with Sadducees
and Pharisees at each other's
theological necks about this
Jesus from Nazareth.

So finally I was pushed to make a visit
although I wanted to actually for myself already
but what I mean is that I needed to
go through the dark on behalf of
the committee.

Nothing wrong is there
about coming out of the dark
to the light?

Well, this was not just him and me,
you know, there was Peter there
(whom our committee has on the list)
and there was John who later
wrote about it and I think Andrew –
just your regular middle east evening group
sitting on mats with dishes on the floor
so many olives, flat bread, herbs and spices,
with little cubes of fish.

They always say
he said they were into fishing.

Of course there were the formalities and so
though they all know who I am
and I said we know that he himself is a Rabbi
sent from the Eternal One blessed be His Name
and I think he caught the 'we know'.
I guess I gave it all away
that I was representing the committee
saying 'we' like that.

His answer was striking.
He said it so straight out:
all of you need to be born again!
Not just me,
no, no, not just Nicodemus,
he meant the whole Sanhedrin I guess.

But I could not report this to them,
I mean to us, our committee,
so I just told them: leave him be,
he's just one the Baptist's disciples
from the Jordan
and if I see him right
a kind of mystic.

But then it all went wrong.

Our committee should have spoken up
even against the Roman judges
because it was all so unnecessary
that's why Joseph and me we went to the hill
last Friday and it was gruesome:
the twisted muscles, the stretched joints
the dead eyes mesmerized with
eternal pain.

Hardly had we got it off the cross
and finally wrapped
and in the cave
that I thought: the end has come
to my world.

What now?
Eternal abandonment everywhere
but I guess we just did it to atone
for all the unnecessary evil
of our times.

Now of course as you could have guessed
his ideas are spreading like wildfire
and the committee will argue all over again
and there will be fierce accusations
of unbelief by each against each.

Didn't we do the right thing
Joseph and I on that black Friday?

It wasn't much.

I hope he will forgive us.

Easter

Granddad tell me
how it happened that Jesus
rose from the grave –
do you think he was all dead?

How does the Bible know?

Son come spring time
we'll go down to the orchard
and we'll see flowers on the trees
and all the insects buzzing
let out of their winter sleep,
but have you ever seen
the caterpillars?

Those creepy worms,
kind of hairy
and full of wiggles?

Grandson, we'll look at
dozens of them if
its a good year
(for the caterpillars)
and you'll see them crawl
into their cotton beds:
but after a couple of weeks
on some spring morning
we'll see them flying out
like Monarchs.

What's a Monarch?

An orange and black
and white or maybe yellow
beautiful butterfly –
the most fantastic.

But granddad,
those caterpillars weren't
all dead were they?

No, son, that is true.
But they were rather wormy.

I just meant to compare
one miracle to another.

Frank Sawyer has taught in seminaries in Latin America and Hungary for almost three decades. Check out his website at ***srta.tirek.hu/lap/sawyer****.*

His book of poems, A Way of Seeing, *can be ordered by emailing fsawyer777@gmail.com.*

Cemetery voice ... *continued from p. 13*

taken captive in Death's dark fold: "Lazarus!" And down, down, down, down, down, down, down in the depths of the netherworld, owned by that baddest of the bad shepherds, Death itself, Lazarus heard his Master's Voice, and came through the dark window of the grave to stand once again in the sun next to his Shepherd.

Easter Testimony

This is why the Christians in Rome conflated the myth of Orpheus with the reality of Jesus. They did not trust in human legends. But they did hang their hopes on the one who said to Martha and Mary, "I am the resurrection and the life!" and then proved it that day in Bethany. In fact, the Roman Christians knew that Jesus had confirmed all of this a short while after the incidents of John 10-11 when he himself went down, down, down, down, down, down, down into the depth of death, and came up again on Easter morning as the Lord of life.

And now, as wives bade farewell to husbands who had been torn apart by the beasts in the Coliseum, as children wrapped the bodies of parents in burial clothes, as friends mourned the deaths of their kindred spirits, the great metaphor of Jesus as the true Orpheus told the most magnificent promise of all. For even in these dark days of deathly haunts, followers of Jesus knew that one time soon the Good and Great Shepherd would shout the names of their loved ones down to Hades itself, and even though captured in shepherd Death's lockdown fold, their family and friends would hear their Master's voice, and they would rise to life and follow him into the eternal kingdom.

We all try to evade and fool Death, stymying him with tummy tucks and fleeing him through our exercise routines and vitamins. But come Death shall, with fateful inclusiveness, whispering our names at night or noon, and, against our wheedling and pleading, will march us into his awful gloom. Then the hope of our faith will endure its final test. For if the gospel is true, our Good and Great and Chief Shepherd will not forget us, but will march down, down, down, down, down, down, down to Sheol and sing us his song of love. And we, who know the voice of our Master, with rise into the dawn of eternity and follow the One who calls us by name.

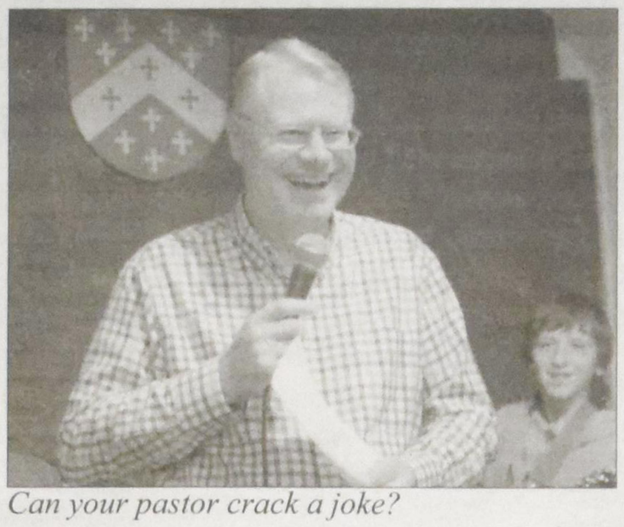
Wayne Brouwer is former pastor of Iron Springs (Alta.) Christian Reformed Church and London (Ont.) First Christian Reformed Church and now teaches at Western Theological Seminary and Hope College, both in Holland, Michigan.

Features

Easter joy and holy joking

Adele Konyndyk

Lenten worship calls us to carry, ponder and release heavy emotions. We sing sombre hymns of ashes, thorns, tears and blood. We wave palm branches in triumphant welcome. But soon after our hosannas comes the heaviest day of all – that Friday when we dwell on Christ's pain and what it purchased … when we tremble, tremble, tremble. Finally, though, finally that glorious lift of a Sabbath arrives and we can celebrate a living Saviour. "Christ is risen!" we exclaim, and enter into Easter week with glowing hearts.



Can your pastor crack a joke?

But for some Christians, the emotions of Lent and Easter culminate in a different way – not only with joyful choruses and liturgies, but also with…actual laughter. In some churches, a pastor will add jokes to either their Easter Sunday sermon or to the one preached the following week. Church members will get in on the humour, too, by sharing jokes and amusing stories. And some believers will even hold Easter week parties, playing games and eating party food.

I have never experienced these Eastertide traditions of laughter – nor have the fellow church members I've canvassed. Even if not typical to my denomination, however, you can be assured that there are brothers and sisters around the world partaking in them this very year.

Risus Paschalis

Although these traditions may be new to you, they are far from modern. They were set in motion hundreds of years ago by a Bavarian monk. As the story goes[1], this monk was pondering the astonishing emotional cycle of Holy Week, from its solemn observances to its incredible end – Easter resurrection. "What a surprise ending," he thought. He was then hit with a new insight that caused him to erupt in hearty laughter, shattering the silent contemplation of his fellow monks. "Don't you see," he cried, "It was a joke! A great joke! The best joke in all history! On Good Friday, when Jesus was crucified, the devil thought he had won. But God had the last laugh on Easter when he raised Jesus from the dead."

The Sunday after Easter then became known as a "Day of Joy and Laughter." In monasteries, and eventually in Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant churches and homes, God's joke on Satan was celebrated by believers with joke-telling. After the message, the priest or minister would come down among the congregation and lead them in a comical story or song. The tradition of "Risus Paschalis" – Latin for "Easter Laughter" – was born.

It was not without opposition. In the 17th and 18th centuries, church leaders – including Pope Clement X – prohibited "*Risus Paschalis*," believing it allowed offensive abuses to God's Word. Still, the tradition continued on in some communities.

I am not surprised that "Easter Laughter" faced resistance in the early Church. Nor would I be surprised to hear that some are hesitant about and critical of these traditions today. Humour has a tricky role in the spiritual life. Reverence is often associated with silence, order and contemplation. Even gentle, tasteful joking can seem out of place in a religious context – especially during Lent.

So where does humour fit in with a penitent heart? Can laughter really be an act of worship, reverence and praise that fits faithfully within the Lent and Easter season?

Mirthful faith life

I have come to think so. Just a few weeks shy of this Lent's beginning, I finished a book that proved humour may well be most appropriate in Easter celebration. The book, *Between Heaven and Mirth*, is written by James Martin, a Jesuit priest longing to change the negative view of humour so often found in religious circles. Through personal anecdotes, scriptural stories and insights from spiritual leaders, Martin invites believers to a more mirthful faith life – one that embraces humour, laughter and joy as spiritual gifts. Oh yes, he also includes actual jokes.

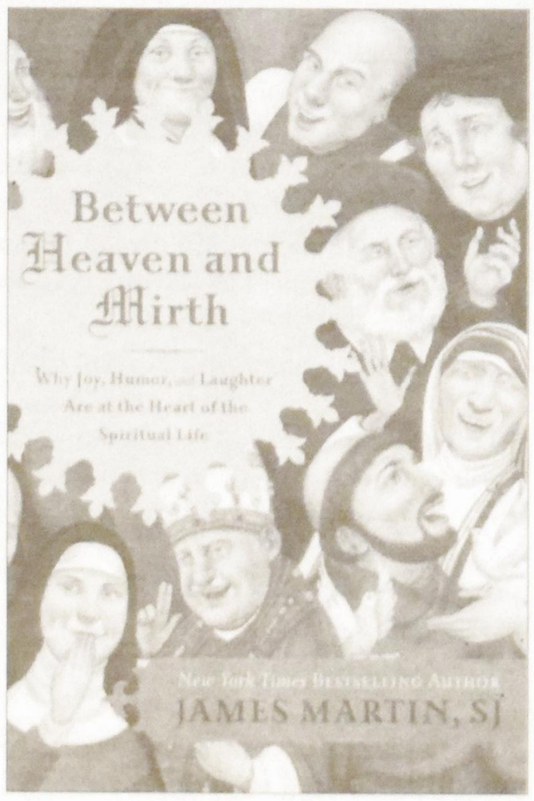
While Martin is an advocate of "holy humour" year round, the timing of my reading had me especially considering its role in Easter. I know there's no one way for the Body of Christ to express joy, as we are a diverse collection of customs, traditions and styles. I am now certain, however, that "Easter laughter" can be a blessed way to orient our hearts to joy after a heavy season.

As Martin repeatedly says, joy can be a powerful way to bear witness to our resurrection hope: *For Christians, an essentially hopeful outlook shows people that you believe in the Resurrection, in the power of life over death, and in the power of love over hatred. Don't you think that after the Resurrection Jesus's disciples were joyful? … Joy reveals faith.*

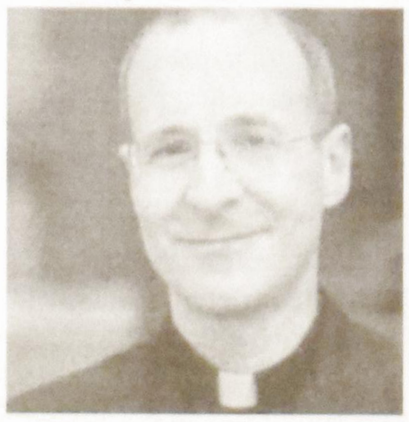
I, too, fully believe that a joke can be a testament of grace – a silly song, a revelation of salvation.

Reflecting on intentional humour has also shown me how unintentional humour can bless our lives. Quite simply, moments of joy and laughter find us even when we have not specifically invited them into the room. This is true in all seasons, but especially important to remember, I think, when rising from the low, often emotionally draining posture of Lent.

Perhaps embracing a spirit of "Easter laughter" can be as simple as remembering or sharing an amusing memory – especially if it happened during Lent's solemn 40 days. So here's one of mine: A couple of years ago, while on an overseas semester of university study, I took part in a Lenten worship service in Bath, England. We sang those sombre songs and heard a sermon on events surrounding Christ's death. We also celebrated communion together, a sacrament especially heavy in the seasons of ashes.



Instead of the small cups of juice and neatly cubed bread used in my church, we passed around one large cup and tore pieces from loaves of bread – great big crusty loaves that are common in European countries. Unaccustomed to such bread, I hurriedly broke my piece when a loaf came my way. And what a piece it was! Much, much larger, than those my friends had taken, I realized with embarrassment.



Father James Martin

When the time came to eat, I tried to gobble my piece quickly and discreetly. But there was no way I could finish it in the time others had. No way I could prevent flakes of bread from raining down all over my lap. And no way I could stop the giggles coming from my friends beside me – or those shaking my own shoulders.

After the service, as we were discussing lunch, one friend looked at me and said, teasingly: "Well, you don't need to worry, you've already had yours." We laughed about my ridiculous hunk of bread for the rest of that day – with me laughing loudest of all.

Communal delight and divine comedy

As I picture myself sitting there, with a lapful of broken bread, I know that Christ's body was honoured, not offended, by that unintentional instance of levity. I am grateful for the strange communal delight it sparked. In its own absurd way, even this small moment speaks to the "big joke" of God defeating evil by the breaking of his Son's body – a breaking that give us all access to our Father's glorious joy.

And so making Easter Week a time of levity makes sense to me – whether we do so in church services and through parties, in contemplation or through conversations with friends. All are ways to see the divine comedy in our story of deliverance.

In this Lenten season, I also carry with me a story of "holy humour" from *Between Heaven and Mirth* – an anecdote recounted to Martin by British writer Margaret Silf. Its premise is reminiscent of the two Marys journeying to Christ's tomb.

Two friends were mourning a mutual friend who had died, missing her terribly. So they went to their friend's grave and planted what they thought were daffodil bulbs. All winter they grieved and waited. Then, in the spring, they returned to the grave to pay their respects. But, instead of beautiful bright flowers, they discovered a beautiful crop of … onions! "They laughed until they cried," says Silf. "And they were convinced their friend was right there laughing with them."

I am convinced it is the same with Christ – that he laughs with us, and in our laughter makes his comfort known. So all-encompassing is God's sense of humour that even accidents and acts of lament can sometimes be occasions for joy.

Lent's plunge into the depths followed by Easter's unprecedented rejoicing reminds us that, whether in sorrow and in gladness, we stand before the Risen Christ. Its emotional arc allows us to make the journey together – all of us "in on" the triumphant "joke" of God's victory.

It does not matter, then, whether or not we officially practise "Easter laughter" as a religious tradition, but only that we live out this spirit of holy levity in our lives. That we recognize humour as a means of sensing the sacred. That we laugh in anticipation of the day when all our joyful sounds will never need come to an end.

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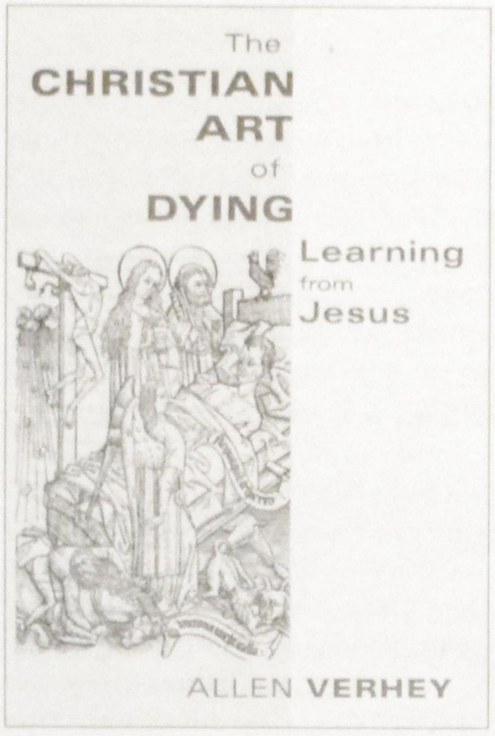
[1] From *Today's Inspirational Story* for March 27, 2005 found on **beliefnet.com.**

Adele Konyndyk (AdeleKonyndyk@gmail.com) is a freelance writer and a member of First Hamilton Christian Reformed Church. She holds an MFA in creative writing from Seattle Pacific University, with an emphasis in fiction.

Reviews



The Christian Art of Dying
by Allen Verhey. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2011

Rescuing death from its hospital bed

Nick Schuurman

The doctor's voice was raised to almost a shout."Colon cancer. You have cancer of the intestine." *Really?* I thought, *this is how they tell you?*

The man laying on the other side of the wall was confused, struggled to hear what was being said. Like a parent teaching a child to string sounds together, this white-coated messenger delivered the diagnosis to the elderly man."Oh," he said, having already begun to walk to the next patient, "we have to ask every patient who comes in here, but if your heart stops beating, do you want us to allow nature to take its course, or do you want us to make your heart start beating again?" He did not ask me this question, nor the man with the bee sting, the mother with her fevered child, or the boy who was bitten by his neighbour's dog. Between those practiced lines of bedside manner lay complex, painful, dark, beautiful worlds of words.

While physical death has remained, since we first tasted it, a constant and (excepting a few cases) irrefutable fact of our existence, how we think about dying and act in response to it has changed dramatically. The exchange I overheard that night at the hospital would simply not have taken place a century ago. Duke theologian and ethicist Allen Verhey has entered into the complex world of death and dying and set about to explore the shifts that have taken place when it comes to our experience of death.

There was a time, Verhey writes, when people died "tame" deaths – simple, public and marked by ritual. Dying was occasioned by the company of the community, whose presence made the reality of death something more than a crude fact of nature. This way of dying was the prevailing pattern for centuries and is in many places still seen today.

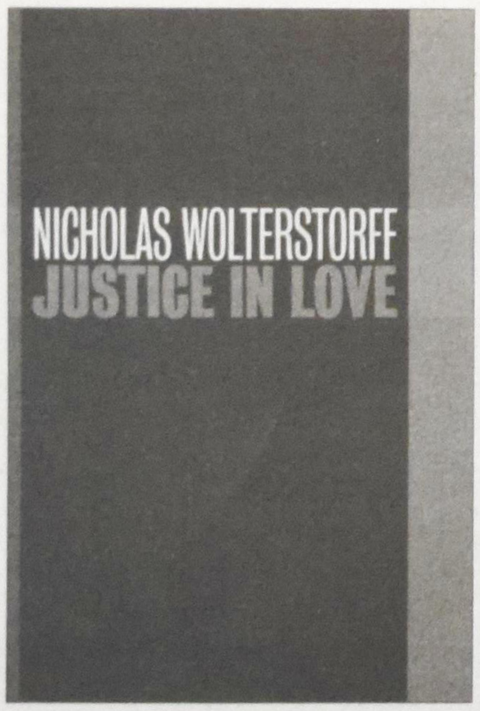
He argues, however, that a different kind of dying has largely become the norm – what he calls "medicalized" death. "The human response to death," he writes, regarding this new way of understanding our mortality, "began to rely less on ritual and community and more on the promise of human mastery over nature and the progress of science and technology." This shift is seen perhaps no more clearly than in his citing of the following statistic: at the end of the Second World War approximately 40 percent of deaths happened in the hospital, while in 1990 more than 90 percent did.

The old practices (a final confession of one's sins, the saying of farewells and prayers, and the passing on of blessings and instructions) have been replaced by new ones (waiting to be seen by the doctor, having one's blood taken) and a new form of company in the form of a nurse. Within the paradigm of medicalized death, Verhey contends, people simply do not die well.

What is more, he believes that the church ought to be more vocal and active in recapturing death from the medical world. To do this, he looks to a "little self-help book" called the Ars Moriendi ("the art of dying"), a fifteenth century abridged and illustrated (several of the illustrations are featured in Verhey's book) version of a longer text, the *Tractatic Artis Bene Moriendi*. It is from this ancient text that he begins to construct a contemporary "art of dying" for our experience today. The practice of prayer, the administration of the sacraments and the presence of care from the community help to inform what "dying well" might look like. While he suggests that there is much to be taken from this little text, there are also elements, including its Stoic and Platonic influences, that ought to be rejected.

The book is written out of Verhey's own experience with death, having been diagnosed several years prior with a rare blood disorder. Left untreated, he was told that he would have, at best, one or two years of life ahead of him. He proceeded to undergo a series of intensive chemotherapy treatments which have, for the time being, kept his illness at bay. That he was, through this experience, confronted by his mortality gives this otherwise bulky and academic volume a little more heart.

Nick Schuurman (reviews@christiancourier.ca) is CC's reviews editor.



Justice in Love
by Nicholas Wolterstorff. Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans Publishing, c. 2011

Clear thinking about love and justice

Kathy Vandergrift

It seems easier to talk about a God of love than a God of justice. Perhaps that is why we have a rich discourse about love of God and love of neighbour, while justice talk is less popular. Our understanding of justice, one of the central teachings of Scripture, is under-developed. It is less used in daily speech and action, or in prayers, liturgy and music.

In the last three years Nicholas Wolterstorff, a highly-respected and clear thinker, has gifted the Christian community with fresh thinking about justice – and love. In three books, at different levels, he challenges gaps and errors in thinking about justice and love, errors that have major impacts on how we live out our Christian faith. *Justice: Rights and Wrongs*, published in 2008, is an academic tour de force, equal in depth to the classic text on justice by John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*. It comes at a time when other great minds, such as Amartya Sen, are also rethinking and writing about the meaning of justice. A second book, *Justice in Love*, published in 2011, brings the two core teachings of Christianity together without reducing either to second place. *Hearing the Call: Liturgy, Justice, Church and World* is a collection of easier-to-read essays on similar themes, published in 2010.

Wolterstorff's work is timely. We have a sense of injustice in our own society and in the world. In church we hear some talk about social justice, but its meaning is ambiguous and it is often contested by appeals to love and charity as a more appropriate focus for Christians. Wolterstorff's work clarifies our thinking and frees us from the tension between love and justice. More importantly, he gives us tools to develop and live out a much-needed public witness for justice in our society.

Love of neighbour, argues Wolterstorff, is not blind to justice; nor does it replace or trump justice. Benevolence and generosity are not adequate understandings of neighbour-love, says Wolterstorff. Care for others, to reflect God's love, also needs to recognize and respect the inherent worth of every person as loved by God, with a right to be treated justly. When I wrong another person, argues Wolterstorff, I wrong God. God in Jesus did not replace justice with love, a common notion among Christians, but proclaims a new age of justice and reconciliation. Forgiveness, writes Wolterstorff, requires being alert to being wronged; it is an act of restoring justice in love.

On the justice side, Wolterstorff helps Christians think through the basis of justice in Scripture and our Christian heritage. Much of our thinking in the Reformed tradition has been rooted in a conception of justice as right order. God created a right order, we say, and justice is when we fit that right order. A more Biblical conception, according to Wolterstorff, is that justice is rooted in the worth of every person as loved by God, with a right to be treated with dignity. Rights-talk is God-talk, when understood in a Biblical way. It is essential to bring God's justice-love into our speech and behaviour.

The implications of thinking through more clearly what we really mean when we use the terms justice and love of neighbour affect how we will live in today's society. In my experience, the focus on right order, without recognition of the inherent worth and dignity of every person, has often led Christians to defend harmful social relations instead of standing up for those whose dignity is under attack. Dismissing human rights as individualism makes it easy to dismiss legitimate claims by those who are not being treated as persons of equal worth. Wolterstorff explains why it is not Biblical to say things would be okay if we just loved eachother more. Love is not a trump card to dismiss justice talk. Integrating the two, instead of accepting the notion that they are in conflict, forces a rethinking of our focus on charity as an adequate response to poverty in Canada, for example. There is much more to be said about a Christian approach to human rights and just social relations, but clarity about the basic teachings of Scripture and the way we talk about these matters is essential.

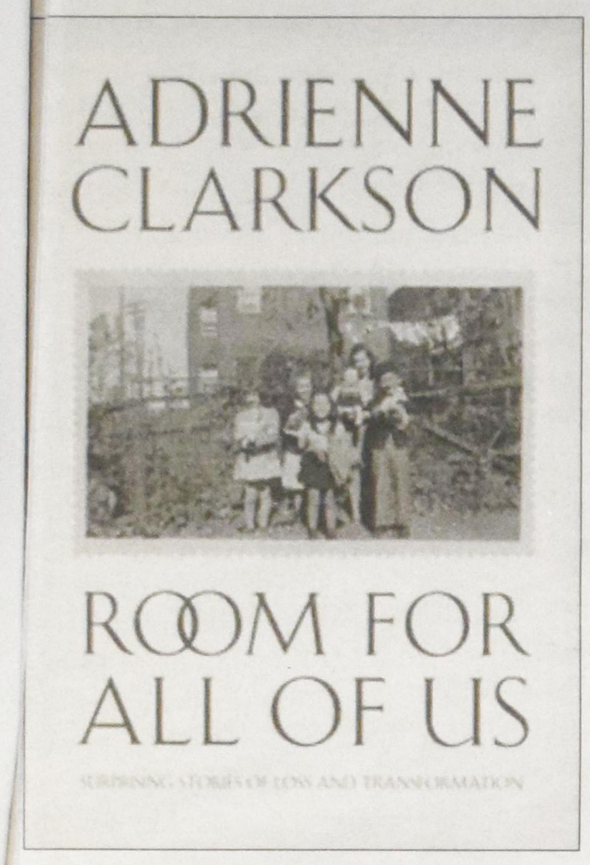
Wolterstorff's systematic style leaves no stone unturned to clarify our understanding. Every objection is carefully analyzed and explained. That makes *Justice in Love* a challenging read – with rich rewards. The book of essays and speeches allows one to taste and benefit from his careful thought in an easy-to-read style.

Another option is to hear Wolterstorff present his careful thinking with an equal amount of passion. He will be in Toronto on April 27 and 28, opening a two-day conference on the meaning of social justice and human rights, sponsored by the Institute for Christian Studies. On Friday evening, April 27, everyone is invited to attend a public lecture, titled "Must Love and Justice Be Forever at Odds?"

Kathy Vandergrift works as a public policy analyst and lives in Ottawa.

Reviews

Former Governor-General reflects on the Canadian immigration experience



Room for All of Us: Surprising Stories of Loss and Transformation
by Adrienne Clarkson.
Toronto: Allen Lane, 2011

Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

When Adrienne Clarkson's friends told her that her refugee journey to Canada, as narrated in her book, *The Heart of the Matter*, "was different from anything anyone else had experienced in Canada," she disagreed. *Room for All of Us* is her response, proof that many people "came out of cataclysm and catastrophe not of their own making and found themselves almost thrown into Canada." She asserts that, though these people might have succeeded elsewhere, it was particularly "fortuitous" that they arrived in Canada.

What is unique about Canada in Clarkson's assessment? The former Governor-General states that Canada's "atmosphere of benevolent neglect, of letting people alone, . . . makes it possible for those who arrive with nothing to sense that they can belong and be part of something they can help to construct."

While Clarkson sings Canada's praises, she doesn't ignore the dark chapters of our history. She cites four groups that were clearly discriminated against. Chinese people were discouraged from entering Canada at the beginning of the 20th century because of the infamous Head Tax that was imposed on them. The Canadian government dispossessed the Doukhobors from the Saskatchewan land that they had worked and lived on for 10 years. Japanese Canadians were transported away from their homes and forced to live in camps. And, to Canada's shame, our nation refused to admit Jews who were being persecuted in the 1930s.

Through the stories that are related, another dark side to life in Canada is revealed. Newcomers experience racism as they do in any part of the world.

Still, Clarkson's tone is optimistic as she tells the stories of people like Fred Bild, who survived the onslaught of the Nazis, and who eventually worked for Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs; John Tran, who escaped Vietnam on a boat and, after several years, became a well-known Canadian cinematographer; and Rathika Sitsabaiesan, who escaped Sri Lanka and later became the first person of Tamil origin to be elected to the House of Commons. Clarkson's other stories include those of draft dodgers, Doukhobors and refugees from Uganda, Serbia and Chile. Throughout, she narrates portions of her own refugee journey which gives her a unique, compassionate vantage point as she relates to others with divergent, yet similar experiences.

Clarkson's tone throughout the book is one of respect and admiration, not only for her own parents who made it possible for her to come to Canada, but also for all other people who have done the same. She writes, "It seems to me we are never grateful enough for the sacrifices people make to come to Canada." Often, the dreams they never realized become a reality in the lives of their children.

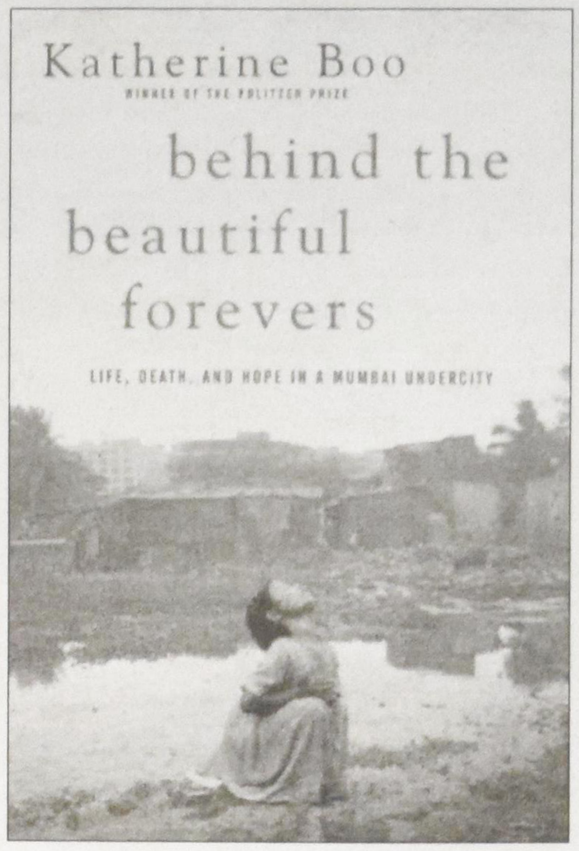
Though Clarkson has some fears for Canada's future, she says, "We have had a wonderful run until now in Canada. Our integration of new citizens has worked well . . . . We have been the beneficiaries of the intelligence, skills and family experience of people who want to settle here."

Each person Clarkson interviewed eventually became successful in Canada. One can't help but wonder if the picture she presents is complete. Many refugees and newcomers never feel at home in Canada. Some commit suicide because of trauma they experienced in their homelands. Others never master English or French and always feel like outsiders. Some never become financially stable, always struggling to make ends meet. One doesn't meet people like this in Clarkson's book. Perhaps that's because stories of people who have tried valiantly, yet failed, aren't as inspiring to read.

Many *Christian Courier* readers will be able to relate to the stories Clarkson narrates, either because they themselves are immigrants, or their parents were. More important, perhaps, is that the stories show examples of Canadians who welcomed newcomers with open arms. As Christians, we see reflected in them Jesus' command to invite the stranger in.

Sonya VanderVeen Feddema (sonyafv55@hotmail.com) is a freelance writer living in St. Catharines, Ont.

Pulitzer Prize winning journalist recounts three years in a Mumbai undercity



Beyond the Beautiful Forevers
by Katherine Boo. New York: Random House, 2012

Nick Schuurman

China has had its share of time in the media spotlight these past few years. The country's industrial growth and increasing dominance on the global political front have, for some time now, had many journalists and social commentators predicting it to be the world's next superpower. Less prominant in the headlines has been its equally populous South Asian neighbour, India.

The reality is, however, that since the turn of the century, no other country except China has managed to exceed India's economic growth. And this growth has come with a measure of pain. The growing affluence of many is sharply polarized by a disturbing and increasingly visible physical poverty. It is into this complex and changing landscape that Katherine Boo, staff writer for *The New Yorker* and former editor for *The Washington Post*, decides to spend three years of her life.

Behind the Beautiful Forevers is her unique account of that time. Boo paints a picture of Annawandi, a slum that has developed near the Mumbai airport and sets about telling the stories of several of its inhabitants.

While it is nonfiction, the book is written as narrative. I would not be surprised if (as was the case with myself), having been so thoroughly captured by the fast-paced storylines and engaging prose, readers will at some point forget they are reading a journalist's account and think that the stories of Abdul, the garbage sorter, and Manju, a young girl who hopes to become settlement's first college graduate, are more novel than newspaper. What adds to the effect is that the author's voice is noticeably absent, save for a brief note at the book's end.

What has been written of India's poor, she felt, was lacking. "I quickly grew impatient with poignant snapshots of Indian squalor: the ribby children with flies in their eyes an other emblems of abjectness that one can't help but see within five minutes of walking into a slum." What concerns her as an journalist and as a person is much more complex, nuanced and systemic (and requires a more lasting engagement) than these photographs: "the most important line of inquiry is something that takes longer to discern." And while the book communicates this, it also captures something deeply human.

In regards to the method with which Boo completed the project, she simply writes, from years of experience as a journalist: "time spent, documentation secured, accounts cross-checked." The degree of Boo's commitment and the amount of work she has invested in this project are made evident by the book's powerful prose and the incredible depth to the descriptions and interactions of its subjects. In addition to three years of handwritten notes, video recordings, audio interviews and photographs, she admits to having also pored through more than three thousand public records.

She allows Mumbai to exist in these pages for what it is: a heartbreaking, bittersweet mixture of joy and pain, full of both human suffering and flourshing. She is determined not to portray what she calls the characteristically "monochromatically miserable place" – the all too common one-sided portrayal of India's poor as an entirely miserable and hopeless population, into which well-groomed and well-intentioned outsiders enter and bring relief.

While she is convinced that "hope is not a fiction," that change is taking place and poverty is being alleviated, she is left disturbed by what she has seen. Like many, Boo views the poverty and human suffering she witnesses on a personal level as part of a much larger system that is broken and deeply corrupt. This sentiment is seen perhaps no more clearly than in the book's final lines: "If the house is crooked and crumbling and the land on which it sits uneven, is it possible to make anything lie straight?"

"It is easy," Boo writes, "from a safe distance, to overlook the fact that in undercities governed by corruption, where exhausted people vie on scant terrain for very little, it is blisteringly hard to be good." The sympathy and frustration she feels, having heard so many of this place's stories, will move readers as well. Dorothy Day, founder of the Catholic Worker movement in the early 20th century, wrote that one of our primary tasks, as Christians, is to work to make a world in which it is easier to be good. I agree and believe that these complex accounts, full of pain and hope, are a call to do so, and as such, are worth being read.

Nick Schuurman (reviews@christiancourier.ca) is CC's Review Editor.

Columns

Everyday Christian

Cathy Smith

Slain in the Spirit on Good Friday

"What do you see, Cathy?"

On Palm Sunday our pastor called us to worship with a dramatic and arresting greeting: "Daughter of Zion, 'See your Saviour comes!'" I'd never before felt so personally addressed, so publicly validated as a woman in church. Sure, I know it's metaphorical. I know it's Jerusalem. But, at that moment, the extraordinary proclamation was for me, too, a daughter of Zion. Jesus the Bridegroom, taking the initiative, coming to me. The distaff version of the Prodigal Son, I mused fancifully.

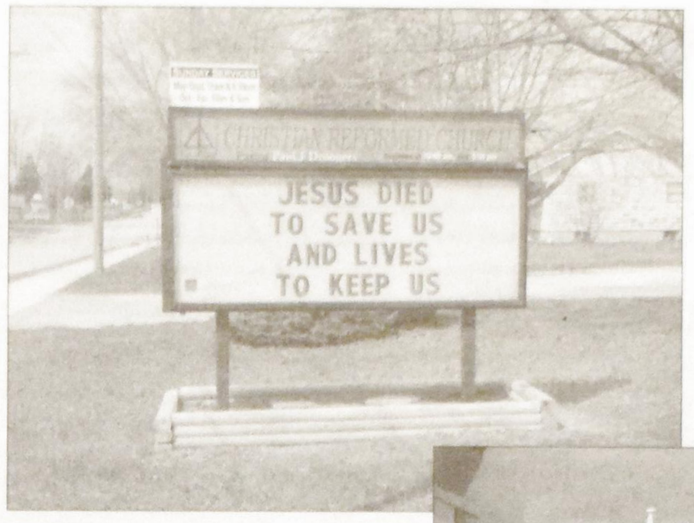
Then, a few days later, at choir practice, I noticed the Lord's Supper table was already dressed for Good Friday's Communion celebration. Palm Sunday's proclamation echoed in my heart: *See, your Saviour comes. He's already prepared the table for you.* Frederick Buechner points out that reading Scripture in a different language can enrich your comprehension of the text. How true of this verse: "*Tu dresses devant moi une table.*" Here is not the daily setting of the table by some grudging servant, but the gracious preparation of a banquet by the host himself, smoothing the linens, eyeing the wine glasses for water spots, troubling himself to ensure that every detail is perfect. A clue that something was up, maybe, but I paid no further attention to what seemed nothing more than my usual proclivity toward imaginativeness.

It happened on Good Friday. Like Ezekiel, "I looked and I saw the glory of the Lord filling the temple of the Lord." No, I didn't fall face down. My cellular construction is knit too tightly with grey woolen threads of Dutch reserve. But somewhere in my soul danced a tiny charismatic, a holy ghoster Appalachian snake-handler, a whirling dervish fanatic in visionary thrall.

Don't get me wrong. I followed the sermon and the liturgy and the singing. I was fully present. But I also saw so much more. Buechner writes about looking "at a window" seeing the "fly-specks, dust, the crack where Junior's Frisbie hit" and looking "through the window" to see the "world beyond." I was looking at my worshiping church family, but seeing beyond, seeing my church as a treasure, a "pearl of great price," gifted out of the liberality of the Host.

Join me at the window. Look past the surface scratches and smears. Come and see the multitudinousness (exactly the right kind of overblown word) of the blessings that fill the sanctuary of even such a humble church like mine.

See the pastor who prepared and prayed over his text. See the elder who visited the nursing home yesterday bringing Communion to the shut-ins. See the devoted daughter who picked up her visually-impaired mom and drove her to church. See the custodian who cubed the bread early this morning. The young people who raked the gravel of the parking lot last night. The 80-year-old who put up the sign *Jesus Died To Save Us And Lives To Keep Us.* The volunteer who photocopied some children's bulletins because the service might be long and the kids might get restless. The sound guy who showed up early to test out the microphones with the mom and daughter who also showed up early to practice their duet. The flautist and trombonist, their exquisite harmony plaintively asking, "Were you there?" The pianist and organist who practiced their pieces the day before. The elders who presented the sacramental meal with the quiet dignity of tuxedoed butlers. The seamstress who stitched a crimson cross on a black banner. The widow who donated the lilies and watered them during the week so their heady fragrance would waft Easter to us already today. The volunteer who arranged for a video to be shown to the Sunday school children. See the people who offered their gifts: their voices, their prayers, their money, their talents, their time. See these friends, the Body of Christ, who brought their fears and worries and hopes and dreams to the cross at 4524 Confederation Line, Wyoming.



I've written this kind of list before. I probably will again. Like Jeremiah, I'm helpless before the One who reaches out his hand and touches my mouth and asks what I see – a vision that never fails to shake me, that impels my spirit to wave frenzied palm fronds before a triumphant Saviour who did not find us unworthy of his love but came riding on a donkey toward a deadly destiny on our behalf. This vision: when we, the prodigals, gather in any old worn and patched church to say we believe that we are "the Holy People, the Redeemed of the Lord, the Sought After, the City No Longer Deserted." And not just "we." Me. The daughter of Zion, wined and dined, desired by the Bridegroom. My hands are still trembling.

Cathy Smith (cathy@christiancourier.ca) is features editor with CC. *She lives in Wyoming, Ont.*

Getting Unstuck

Arlene Van Hove

Get ready for a growth spurt!

Q. I am a single male in my early 20s and going from job to job. I still live with my parents and have no idea what I want to do with my life. I see my friends in secure jobs ready to marry and have a family. I am so far removed from those possibilities it bothers me.

I am the second child of three and my parents are very busy with their own lives. As long as I pay my room and board and stay out of trouble everything is fine with them. My older brother and younger sister are attending a local community college. I have had three jobs since graduating from high school. I pumped gas, stocked shelves in a grocery store and now I am in retail sales but I work only four-hour shifts. I come out of a Christian home but am still evaluating if my parents' faith works for me.

I have a platonic female friend. We get together regularly for coffee. She tells me I am too down on myself and need to stop thinking I am never "good enough." She says it sucks the energy out of me that I need to tackle life. She also tells me she is tired of the macho defensiveness I use to cover up my lack of confidence. I tell her she is wrong and that I feel just fine about myself. But she is right. Lately, I feel depressed because I seem to be going nowhere.

R. We are often told that we should accept or love ourselves as we are. But this suggestion is not always helpful since we need to grow and mature as life moves on. If we don't, we become stagnant. Your depression may well be an indication for you to get out of your comfort zone. What was okay for you two or three years ago may not fit today. And so, it sounds like you are due for a challenging growth spurt.

You are struggling with two issues. First, you are dissatisfied with your work life, which is linked to the second issue, your thinking you are "not good enough." While it is not unusual to be critical of yourself at your age, ongoing negative feelings can stymie your natural development. Unfortunately, there is no way you can flick a switch and suddenly feel better about yourself. So, you need to take a few risks.

First, I suggest you run to the nearest employment/career development office to get some indication of your strengths and interests. And before you get on the bandwagon and tell yourself you do not have any strengths, I would like to insist you do. You are just not aware of them. Every person has strengths and you need to get acquainted with yours.

Second, should you find an occupation that is more satisfying as a result of your work with a career counselor but you continue to feel hampered by negative feelings about yourself, I suggest you do some inner work.

Some theorists believe a negative self-image can be helped by becoming involved in activities or achievements that boost the ego. While there is some merit to this view, since "competence breeds confidence," the flood of good feelings that any activity or achievement might bring will be short lived and you will soon be on the lookout for more ego boosters. This can be exhausting and can lead to burnout.

So, it seems you have two options. Either you participate in activities/achievements that will help you build some confidence but possibly burn out down the road. Or you participate in activities/achievements that will help you build confidence but you also do some inner work into your belief that you are "not good enough."

I would suggest you choose the latter. Once you gain some awareness of the source of your negative feelings and how they hamper your life, I suggest you practice empathy on yourself (rather than being defensive). Over time practicing empathy becomes second nature and your usual defensiveness becomes part of the past. A great side effect of practicing empathy on yourself is the ability to be more readily empathic to others.

Arlene Van Hove (avanhove@shaw.ca) is a therapist and a member of the Fleetwood CRC.

Columns

Our World Today

Bert Hielema

Peak oil

The world is a dangerous place, not because of those who do evil, but because of those who look on and do nothing.

– Albert Einstein

It is said that when a frog is deposited in a boiling pan it jumps out right away, but when it is eased into warm water that is then slowly heated the frog blithely burns to death. I believe this little tale illustrates the plight of our society, which in the last century has very gradually become addicted to fossil fuel. The results of this have been highly variable climate conditions and almost impossible challenges now that the supply of finite oil is decreasing.

One of the many books I own is *Something New Under the Sun: An Environmental History of the Twentieth-Century World* by historian J. R. McNeill. McNeill notes that "In the last 100 years the number of people in the world has increased by an unprecedented 500 percent," and suggests about energy that "No other century in human history can compare with the twentieth for its growth in energy use.... The world used 20 million tons of oil in 1900. In 1990 it was 3000 million," 150 times more.

The consequences of both population growth and our ever expanding oil consumption are truly frightening. The result has been that our earth has contracted a form of leprosy as its skin is being stripped of topsoil, while deforestation and clouds of carbon dioxide have given our planet a form of lung cancer and caused rapid hiccups in its climate. Meanwhile our growing debts and deficits are deadly for the global economy.

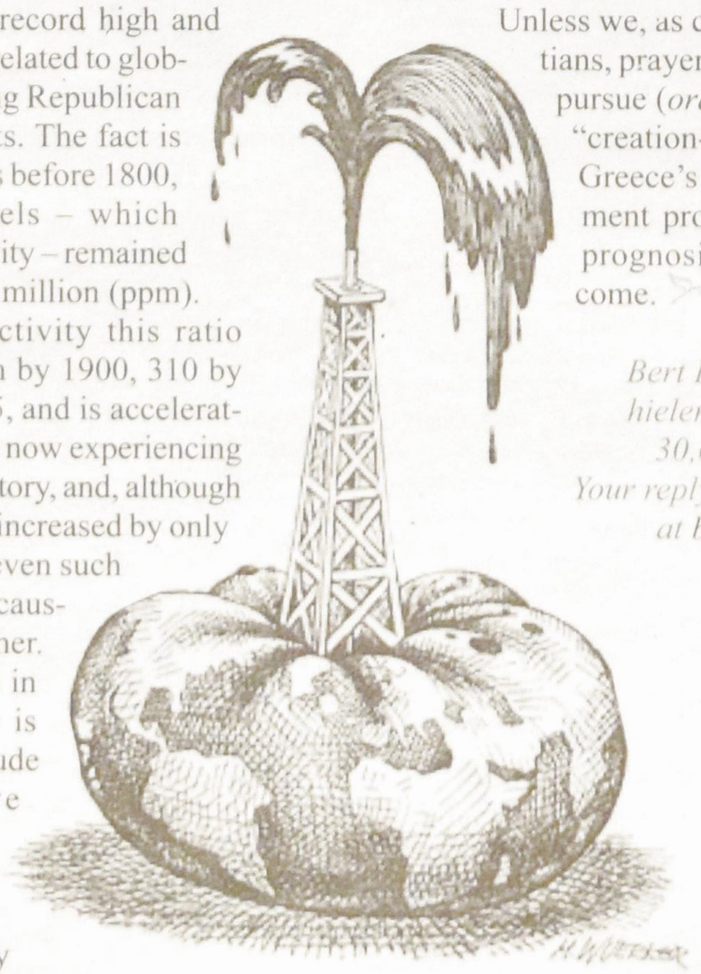
Since 2000 we have had extreme weather symptoms, evident in record high and low temperatures and in record high and low precipitation, all related to global warming, something Republican politicians deny exists. The fact is that for the 1000 years before 1800, carbon dioxide levels – which regulate climatic activity – remained around 280 parts per million (ppm). Due to industrial activity this ratio increased to 295 ppm by 1900, 310 by 1950 and 360 in 1995, and is accelerating ever faster. We are now experiencing the hottest years in history, and, although surface temperatures increased by only 0.6 degrees Celsius, even such a small increment is causing havoc in the weather.

We happen to live in a world where there is a finite supply of crude oil. No alternative source can provide anything close to the cheap, highly concentrated energy that petroleum provides. Sorry to repeat myself, but in the future we will have to live in a world almost entirely deprived of these highly effective energy sources. Our use of temporary oil has pampered us into complacency and paralyzed us like the frog in hot water. Our world is extra dangerous because many Christians, who should be in the forefront of honouring God's creation, are among the most outspoken deniers of our air contamination. It reminds me of a saying by Luther, the church reformer: "Sometimes the curses of the godless sound more pleasing to God than the hallelujahs of the pious!" I can well imagine a godless skier cursing when he sees a hymn-singing snowmobiler destroying his ploddingly prepared ski trail.

When we deny a problem we forfeit the future. Yet a different future is forming because soon the gushing of gasoline will be reduced to a trickle. Simply put, we, for the last few generations, have pursued the wrong narrative: we have lived the lie, have chosen the "broad way" which C. S. Lewis called "the easy slope, no sudden turns, the smooth way to hell." Unless we acknowledge our creation-poisoning, we cannot choose the future, which demands clean, green living.

Actually a shortage of fuel may be a good thing for us, because it gives us the opportunity to free ourselves from our addictive dependence on poisonous petroleum products. I know it can be done. I am old enough to remember how my grandparents, before they had electricity, were wise in the ways of the Lord. The 1930s in their rural west part of the Province of Groningen had pockets of God-fearing people: vibrant Christian communities where music, poetry and home entertainment were flourishing. Yes, their lives were labour-intensive, but satisfying and environmentally responsible.

Unless we, as clusters of Christians, prayerfully ponder and pursue (*ora et labora*) new "creation-friendly" ways, Greece's present predicament provides us with a prognosis of what is to come.



Bert Hielema's blog – hielema.ca – received 30,627 hits in 2011. Your reply is welcome too at bert@hielema.ca.

Words from Wild Horses

Kenny Warkentin

My supply

During Lent, I choose to give something up so that I am aware of the desperation in my soul and my need of a Saviour. Living in the West, we are bombarded with choices: entertainment, food, luxury, and other things to numb us from the realities of our soul. Fasting has been a tool to help keep my flesh in line with what God wants to reveal in my life. It strips away everything until I am bare-naked in the spiritual.

Stripping away the chocolate, the mass of sugary decadence, I find a resolute Saviour, full of love and compassion for me. A Saviour who says he will supply my every need according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus, who will satisfy me when I am in lack. Fasting is about asking the Holy Spirit to reveal those things within me that separate me from God. I know myself. I get caught up in doing life, doing ministry and I begin to keep busy, going places, and seeing people and to not be as aware of my own neediness.

A few years ago I decided to try a 40 day fast during the season of Lent. Most times when I talk about that experience, people will ask, "How did you survive?" or "Did you eat anything?" This fast was a pivotal time in my life. It had been two years since I had left a gay identity and I wanted to go even deeper spiritually. There were things that I recognized in my flesh that I didn't particularly like. I had given up a lot to follow Jesus, but what I realized was that as I gave up something I would then gorge on something else that I deemed less destructive for me.

I found I had a propensity to do things that would give me pleasure. Eating was certainly one of those things, and I recognized that this was an issue. I LOVE food and didn't realize the hold it had on my life, and had no clue about the depth of this behaviour until during the fast. As I gave up food, I realized my propensity to fill myself with anything that would give me a temporary fix. There seemed to be a vacuum inside me that was unquenchable. But recognizing this is one thing, and doing something about it is another. So I began by taking baby steps and allowed myself to sit in the rawness of the emotions I was feeling.

Fasting can help bring us in line with what God wants to reveal in our lives.

When I was desperate to be filled, I would sit asking God to come and fill me and to seek out his supply that would fill my lack. What I encountered was an amazingly loving Father who desired to come and dine with me. He had this spiritual banqueting table for me to feast on and the food was his immeasurable love. The fast was an incredible experience.

You'd think that after this experience I would continue to walk this out everyday, but slowly I began to revert back. What's harmful with a little bit of chocolate, another cup of coffee, a new pair of shoes, watching TV? Nothing is wrong with those things, unless they are used to cover up an unmet need or fill a void in our lives. Sometimes we begin to use these things as ways of coping with life instead of going to God. I discovered just how selfish I am about getting my needs met. I found I needed discipline, especially in spiritual areas to keep me grounded and my heart focused. Fasting is one area that I found to be very helpful in getting myself back on track. Not in a shame filled or legalistic way, but in a desire to strip away the things that I begin to find are cluttering my space, stopping me from authentically meeting with the Lord.

God knows that I will run to other things rather than him. Even when I have learnt things once, my propensity is that I will still run away from God if given a chance to meet my own need. I find that giving something up during Lent allows me to realize again the extravagant love of God. It is recognizing my own depravity in my humanness, uncovering the truth that in the midst of my own failings God beckons me to come to him. He is always willing to fill and meet my every need, and he does each and every time.

Kenny Warkentin (kennyp66@gmail.com) works full time as an urban missionary with Living Waters Canada and is an artist and musician. He lives in Winnipeg with his wife and daughter.

Classifieds

Anniversaries

Happy 60th Anniversary

Arie and Menk Vander Lugt

March 19, 2012

We thank the Lord for giving our parents 60 years of blessings, joy and happiness in their marriage and pray that those blessings will continue for many years to come.

With all our love, your children,
Gerald and Judy Vander Lugt, Pete Vander Lugt,
Corinne and Martin Tempelman, Pauline and Jack Smit,
Len and Denise Vander Lugt
and your grandchildren.

50th Wedding Anniversary!

March 30, 1962–2012

With thankfulness to God, we are happy to announce the 50th wedding anniversary of our parents and grandparents:

Oille and Wille Hiemstra (nee Schinkel)

Congratulations, Mom and Dad. Thank you for your love for all of us and for being such a powerful example of love and faithfulness.

Brian & Carol Ann Hiemstra, Thorndale, ON
Ben, Wyatt, Axel
Duane & Thea Hiemstra, Thorndale, ON
Nadine, Sara
Sandra & Paul Hardy, Hillsboro, OR
Dana, Nathan
Mark & Cathy Hiemstra, Thorndale, ON
Joel, Ryan, Daniel, Bethany
Heather & Larry Wilson, Markleville, IN
Antoine, Chad, Simon, Rachael
Chad Blackall & Nancy Melo, Thorndale, ON
Tanisha

Home Address: 21117 Rebecca Rd.
Thorndale ON N0M 2P0

Obituary

April 15, 1912 — March 6, 2012
Leeuwarden, The Netherlands — Barrie, Ont., Canada

Grace (Geeske) Duiker

Passed away peacefully at the Mill Creek Care Centre in Barrie on Tuesday, March 6, 2012 in her 100th year.

Beloved wife of the late Oscar.
Loving mother of
Carla & Everett Boeyenga, Barrie
Jack & Barbara Duiker, Barrie
Jane & John Kloosterman, Barrie
Jeddy (predeceased) & John Dupain, Barrie
Jerry & Susan Duiker, Stratford
Hilda & Aarn Kloosterman, Barrie
Rose & Andrew Barr, Windsor
Gerard & Ellie Duiker, Toronto
Ann & John Rupke, Toronto
Marion & William McLean, Orillia
Grace leaves a legacy of 36 grandchildren, 69 great-grandchildren, and 14 great-great-grandchildren.
A service of celebration was held on March 9, 2012 at the Covenant CRC of Barrie.
Correspondence: 278 Hurst Drive Apt 309
Barrie ON L4N 0Z3

Obituary

Born, Feb. 8, 1928 — With the Lord, Feb. 18, 2012
Zwaagwesteinde, Friesland — Sarnia, Ont.

Bart (Bartele) Huizinga

The Lord in his infinite wisdom took to be with himself our dear husband, father, grandfather and great-grandfather at the age of 84. He was the faithful husband of Edith Pama for 5 years. Bart was predeceased by wife, Frances Huizinga in 2004.

He was the loving, wonderful father of
Pat Mensinga (Renee) (Sarnia)
Betty and Arnie Wildschut (Sarnia)
Grace and Bert VanHarten (Mt. Forest)
John and Jane Huizinga (Dominican Republic)
Ralph and Patty Huizinga (Sarnia)

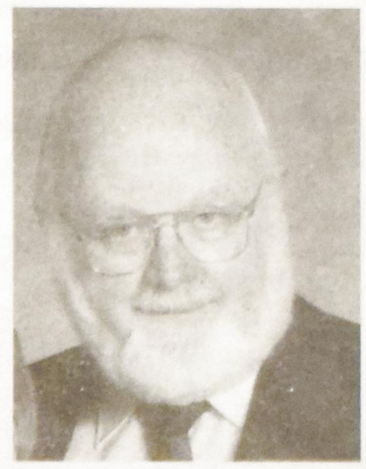
The Lord also blessed Bart with 18 grandchildren and 12 great-grandchildren.

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day . . .. 2 Timothy 4:7-8

Mailing address: #701-1270 Pontiac Court
Sarnia ON N7S 4Y8

Obituaries

John Prinzen



It is with the Lord's great joy and our sadness that He took unto Himself John Prinzen on January 7, 2012, in his 84th year.

Dad put up a courageous battle especially in the end, and guided us through what was to come, but in the end it was comforting to watch God take him peacefully.

John leaves behind a loving family and many friends. His beloved and devoted wife of 59 years Siny (Lammers), his children who are so proud of him: Daphne Prinzen and her children Joshua and Mackenzie Stoffelsen, and Wesley & Melissa Prinzen and their children Wesley Jr. and Nate.

John has a large extended family: Henk & Iet Prinzen (Holland), Annie & Henk Nyman (Bloomfield), Bill & Gerda Prinzen (Hamilton), Ina Prinzen (Grimsby), Hans & Frances Prinzen (deceased), Dietz & Ray DeVries (Ancaster), and Tony & Lolly Prinzen (Port Hope). His in-laws will also mourn his passing: Hennie (deceased) & Grada Lammers (Holland), Liza & Hendrik (deceased) Wynveen (Holland), Arie & Gerda (deceased) Lammers (Beamsville), Geert & Jannie Lammers (St. Catharines), Wim (deceased) & Jo Lammers (St. Catharines), and Alied Lammers (Holland).

He is also survived by many very close family friends, and some that he has joined in heaven.

What God has gained we have lost as a family and community: John was a very caring, kind and dedicated man in all he did. During his professional career he had worked at Children's Aid Society, and Child and Adolescent Services. He, along with his wife, Siny were a part of the founding group of Homestead Christian Care in Hamilton (even opening up their own home), and extensively involved in Dawn Patrol Group Homes in Hamilton. John was also involved in family mediation and custody & access work. Both Dad and Mom followed out their passion for helping children and others in big and small ways, never wanting or expecting anything in return, it was God's calling for them. Many people's lives have been touched by Dad. This love and dedication carried over into his personal life as well, as children of his we were immensely blessed with an amazing father and Opa. You are our angel now, and although we are very sad and will miss you so, we know you are in a much better place, and will now watch over all of us until we meet again. We Love You!

The Funeral Service was held at Bethel Christian Reformed Church. The Book of Condolence can be signed at www.kitchingsteepeandludwig.com

Correspondence: Siny Prinzen
2015 Headon Rd, Burlington ON L7M 4G3

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Lena (Esser) Joosse

In her 87th year went to be with her Lord and James (2010) her beloved husband of 64 years.

She will be missed by her children: John and Yetty Joosse, Ivan and Verna Joosse, James Jr. and Alice Joosse, Marilyn and Jan VanDenBerg, Gilbert, Franklin, David and Yvonne Joosse

Her grandchildren: Joshua and Angie Joosse, Angela Joosse and Henk DeHaan, Sara and Michael Joosse-Flikkema, Bradley VanDenBerg, Darryl Joosse, Melinda and Kyle Manweiler, Eva Joosse and Joel Koops, Karen and Joshua Hollander, Paul Joosse, Katie Joosse and Ben Greidanus, Ashley and Jeffrey Wood, Glenda VanDenBerg, Kristen Joosse and Bretton Dudar, Daniel Joosse, Bryan Joosse.

Her great-grandchildren: Josiah, Jonas, Brendan, Luke, Grace, Justin, Haley, Wesley, Anika, Ethan, Elena, Avery, Zolan, Reese, Blake, Chiara, Judah, Hudson, Logan

Her and James' siblings: Katie Chivers, Albertina Vanderheide, Jenny and Lex Kaptein, Peter and Lynn Esser, Idie Esser, Ann Esser, Nellie and Herman Berg, Catharine and John Prange, Harry and Lammie Joosse, Sylvia Dykstra, Madeline Janse.

And her many friends and neighbours.

Donations in Lena's memory can be made to: Institute for Christian Studies (www.icscanada.edu), Citizens for Public Justice (www.cpj.ca), or Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (www.crwrc.org)

Grace Christian Reformed Church
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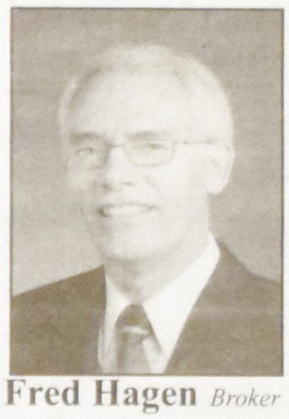

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Mar 23 Woodstock Dutch Theatre Group presents '*Wie Kaatst...die Wint.*' **London** Dutch Canadian Hall at * pm. See Feb 27 issue..

Mar 25 Dutch Service will be held in the **Ancaster** Christian Reformed Church at 3:00 p.m. Rev. John Klomps will be preaching. DVDs are available.

Apr 14 Woodstock Dutch Theatre Group presents '*Wie Kaatst...die Wint.*' Great Lakes Christian College. **Beamsville**. 2:30 pm. See Feb 27 issue.

Apr 20–21 NILDCanada Conference, "Changing Your Mind", at Knox Christian School, **Bowmanville**. A warm welcome to all educators, Homeschoolers and parents to our annual conference. Downloadable brochure at www.nildcanada.org Please join us as together we explore quality learning solutions to help students with ADHD, Dyslexia and other learning challenges.

Apr 20–22 Reformed Marriage Encounter Weekend. London, ON Register at reformedme.org.

Apr 21 Annual Male Choir Festival. 7:30 pm. Mount Hamilton CRC, **Hamilton**, Ont. Tickets $15. Call 905-689-5266 for more information

May 1–4 Growing the Church in the Power of the Holy Spirit Guelph Bible Conference Grounds, **Guelph**, ON For information please visit dunamisfellowshipcanada.org For an event brochure, contact dfc@dunamisfellowshipcanada.org or 519-821-3603

May 5–6 Grace Christian Reformed Church, **Welland** ON will celebrate its 50th Anniversary. Join us for a Lasagne Dinner on Saturday and a Worship Celebration on Sunday. Contact rnieuwold@becon.org for more information.

May 4 Noon Organ Recital Series (seventh season) St. Jude's Anglican Church, **Brantford**. Every Friday in May at 12.15 p.m. Free. Featuring Stephanie Burgoyne and William Vandertuin in Organ solos and "Organ four hand" selections.

May 11 Noon Organ Recital Series (seventh season) St. Jude's Anglican Church, **Brantford**. Every Friday in May at 12.15 p.m. Free Featuring Andrew Keegan Mackriell, Director of Music: St. Paul's Anglican Cathedral.

May 18 Noon Organ Recital Series (seventh season) St. Jude's Anglican Church, **Brantford**. Every Friday in May at 12.15 p.m.

May 25 Noon Organ Recital Series (seventh season) St. Jude's Anglican Church, **Brantford**. 12:15 p.m. Free. Featuring Joel Vanderzee, Organist Choirmaster St. John's - Kilmarnock School, Breslau.

June 8–9 Immanuel Christian Schools of **Lethbridge**, Alberta, will celebrate 50 years of God's goodness. For more information, please call the business office at (403) 327-4233 or visit our website at www.immanuelchristian.org

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Sylvia Isaac

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June 29 – July 3/12

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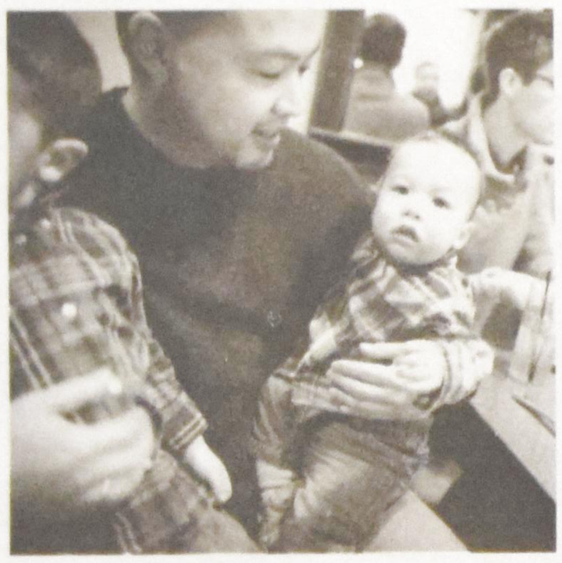

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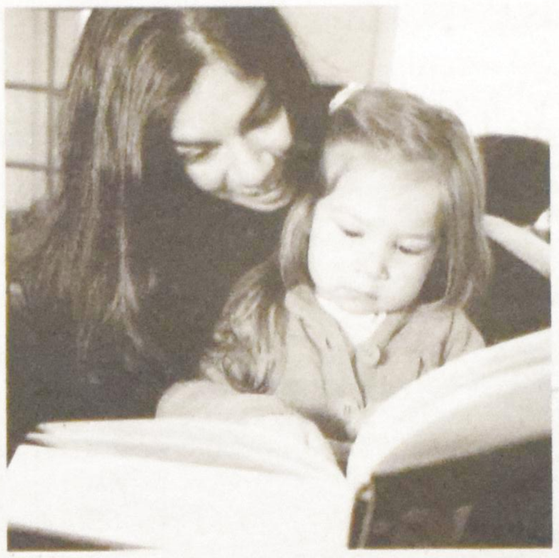

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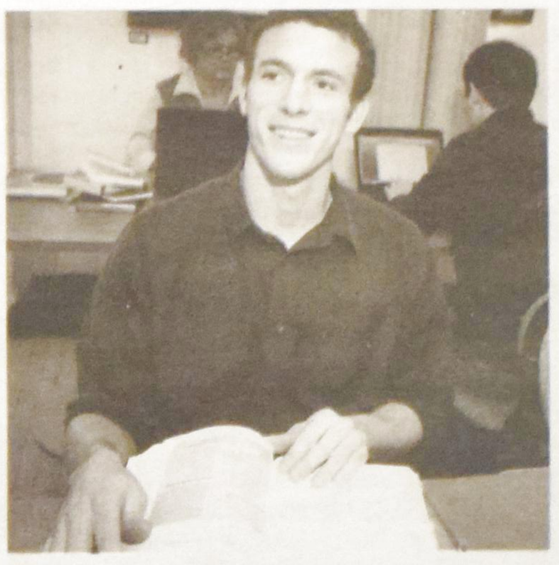

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How do we choose our charities?

Anne van Arragon Hutten

The Canadian Cancer Society made news in 2011 when it was discovered that only 22 percent of funds raised are used for cancer research. Disillusioned donors stopped giving to many other charities as well.

In December I received a fundraising letter from the Lung Association of Nova Scotia, asking for help on an emergency basis. Donations to the Lung Association, it said, were down by 40 percent, preventing it from carrying out its work. I wrote a letter to the organization's president and CEO, asking him whether they employ an outside fundraising agency. Also, why did he not address the real issue, which is loss of trust in charities that purport to exist for the benefit of the suffering masses? Why not state what percentage of donations received go directly toward research? My letter was polite, but two months later I have not received a response.

Another appeal came from Smile Train, which provides corrective surgery for children born with a cleft palate. Seeing the heartbreaking faces on the envelope, I went online to check them out. According to the Charity Watch website (**charitywatch.org**), Smile Train's president, Brian Mullaney, earned $678,058 in 2009. Their fundraising letters claim that "100 percent of your donation goes to program – 0 percent goes to overhead," and the organization defends this claim by saying all overhead expenses are paid for by Founding Supporters.

Revelations like these have made many of us skeptical about supporting so-called good causes. We contributed to earthquake survivors in Haiti, only to find that two years later there are still untold numbers of people living in tents, lacking clean water, medical care and employment. Where has the money gone?

In Christian Reformed circles the accepted wisdom is that donations may safely be made to the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC), or else to the Mennonite Central Committee. These organizations do good work, through micro-finance programs and other things. Still, a skeptic wonders why the heads of church agencies earn more than many of us in the pew (for instance, according to the Better Business Bureau Wise Giving Report, the Director of the CRWRC's American office earned $122,967 in 2009). Worse, even the CRC has had its financial scandals. Think of the 1990s IRM scandal, when "some $228 million dollars were at stake, given by 1500 individuals and agencies of the Christian Reformed Church in North America" (for more on this see **swierenga.com/IRM_pap.html**).

Choosing well

So how do we choose our charities?

To begin with, we should look online. I've already mentioned Charity Watch, from the American Institute of Philanthropy, which rates various charities. It uses blunt speech, for example under the heading, "Cancer Charities Need Dose of Organizational Chemotherapy." The report says that "cancer charities perform poorly – half of the cancer charities that AIP rates … receive a D or F grade and only 37 percent receive an A or B."

The Children's Wish Foundation International, another well-known charity, employs the Reese Brother Company to raise its funds. Here's Charity Watch's report: "the Children's Wish Foundation's 1997 federal return showed a budget of $21.3 million, with $12.9 million, or about 60 percent being paid to Reese Brothers. The actual amount spent on granting dying children's wishes was reported as $1.9 million, about nine percent of the organization's total expenses, to complete 207 wishes, and another $0.4 million was spent on related services. $11.6 million, or about 84 percent of this charity's program service expenditures, were used to 'distribute educational material about wish children to the general public.'" This particular report, although 12 years old, gives donors a good idea of who actually benefits from their gifts.

Other organizations that rate charities are Give Well (**givewell.org**) and MoneySense (**moneysense.ca/tag/top-100-charities**), which has an easily accessible list of charities complete with the percentage of funds going to programs, fundraising efficiency and an overall grade. The concept of good stewardship is integral to Christian thought. Researching the charities we support seems a good place to begin.

Anne van Arragon Hutten lives on an Annapolis Valley farm. Besides writing, she helps prune apple trees, tends her flower gardens, and spends time with her four sons and their families.